

# Fundamental and adult education

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## Contents

EDITORIAL . . . . .	129
ABOLITION OF ADULT ILLITERACY IN THE U.S.S.R. (1917-40)	
Organization of the campaign to abolish adult illiteracy in the U.S.S.R., by A. M. Ivanova . . . . .	131
Organization of education for illiterate and semi-literate adults, by A. M. Ivanova. . . . .	141
Curricula and syllabuses of the schools for illiterate and semi-literate adults, by A. M. Ivanova . . . . .	144
Methods of teaching reading and writing to adults, by V. D. Voskresensky . . . . .	154
Textbooks and study aids for illiterates and semi-literates, by A. M. Ivanova . . . . .	173
Guidance on teaching methods given to teachers engaged in the literacy campaign, by A. M. Ivanova . . . . .	182
Survey of the literacy campaign in the U.S.S.R., by A. M. Ivanova . . . . .	186

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# Abolition of adult illiteracy in the U.S.S.R. (1917-40)

Editorial

The policy of abolishing illiteracy in the U.S.S.R. is a world topic and has long been a subject of interest to all nations, but it is perhaps something of a novelty that in the U.S.S.R. the first step was to abolish illiteracy in a single country. It was not a matter of mere theory, but of practical action, rather than a purely theoretical or a purely political one.

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Although we have stated in our report on the results of the literacy campaign in the U.S.S.R. that the first step was to abolish illiteracy in a single country, it is perhaps something of a novelty that in the U.S.S.R. the first step was to abolish illiteracy in a single country. It was not a matter of mere theory, but of practical action, rather than a purely theoretical or a purely political one. The policy of abolishing illiteracy in the U.S.S.R. is a world topic and has long been a subject of interest to all nations, but it is perhaps something of a novelty that in the U.S.S.R. the first step was to abolish illiteracy in a single country. It was not a matter of mere theory, but of practical action, rather than a purely theoretical or a purely political one.





The policy of devoting an entire issue of the bulletin to a single topic has been followed in previous numbers, but it is perhaps something of a novelty that in this issue we treat a literacy campaign in a single country from several points of view, rather than grouping articles on a narrower theme from a variety of national sources.

The choice of experience in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for such treatment requires little explanation. Most literacy workers have been struck by the success of the adult literacy campaign undertaken in the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1939, leading as it did to the eradication of illiteracy in a large population within a short space of time. However, there has been a dearth of documents, in languages other than Russian, describing the approach and methods followed by the Soviet people in organizing their attack on adult illiteracy. Faced with requests for information, the Unesco Secretariat took up the question with the National Commission of the U.S.S.R. for Unesco; and it is thanks to the efforts of the National Commission and to the generous collaboration of two Soviet educators, A. M. Ivanova and V. D. Voskresensky, that the present publication has been made possible.

Although we have treated as many aspects as possible of the literacy campaign, limitation of space has obliged us to omit one interesting study, by I. M. Bogdanov, on the teaching of arithmetic. This contribution will be published in a later issue of the bulletin. So as to focus attention on actual literacy work, we have not dealt with the broader aspects of educational development, such as the creation of a network of schools for the school-age population. Frequent references are made, however, to co-ordinated planning so that the reader will realize that parallel advances in other educational and cultural spheres were needed to ensure that, once literate the people remained so.





# Organization of the campaign to abolish adult illiteracy in the U.S.S.R.<sup>1</sup>

## LITERACY OF THE POPULATION IN TSARIST RUSSIA

The all-Russian census of 1897 showed that 35.8 per cent of the male population (over 9 years of age) and 12.4 per cent of the female population were able to read and write. In other words, the literacy rate for women was barely one-third of the rate for men. The level of literacy among the peoples of non-Russian nationality was even lower. Vast regions in the north and east of Russia had practically no schools. According to the census, the number of literate persons for every 1,000 of the native population in the north and east of Russia was: Tadjiks 5, Usbeks 16, Turkmenians 7, Kirghiz 6, Yakuts 7, and so on.

In the 20 years that followed the census there was no essential change in the cultural level of the masses in Russia. Before the Revolution, 9,650,000 pupils were enrolled in the primary and secondary schools. The rate at which the number of schools and pupils increased was extremely slow. The most intensive growth of school population took place during the three years preceding the first world war, from 1911 to 1913, but even in this period the number of pupils in the elementary schools increased by only 600,000. Consequently the bulk of the population was still illiterate in 1917, when the Great October Socialist Revolution took place.

The school system in Tsarist Russia was based on class and social standing. The ruling classes had their own schools which offered the pupils a good general or specialized education (gymnasia, realschulen, commercial schools, etc.). The system of elementary education for the working masses included various types of primary schools. The primary schools for peasants, workers and artisans offered a 3- or 4-year course of instruction. The subjects taught were: religion, Russian language, arithmetic and singing. Some instruction in geography, the history of Russia, and natural history was given in reading classes.

There were also 5-year schools with an extended programme. In these schools the teaching of arithmetic included fractions and proportion in addition to problems with whole numbers, and natural history, geography and history were studied as separate subjects.

In schools for non-Russian peoples, classes were conducted in the Russian language. There were practically no textbooks in the native languages of the pupils.

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1. By A. M. Ivanova.

Even less attention was given to the education of adults. No educational system for adults existed. The number of schools and courses for adults was negligible and totally inadequate for the needs of the population. Adult schools and courses were maintained on the meagre sums which the local rural and urban authorities set aside out of the total funds available for public education. So-called Sunday and evening schools owed their existence to the initiative of progressively minded individuals and charitable societies. The teachers worked without remuneration.

These were the only schools accessible to the working people. The subjects taught were grammar, the four rules of arithmetic, and religion. Classes were attended by adults in their free time on Sundays or holidays, or during evening hours. This amounted to 35-36 school days a year in the Sunday schools, and 80 to 120 in the evening schools. The Sunday schools had no fixed programmes.

Official statistics for the year 1905 show that the Ministry of Public Education maintained only 782 Sunday and evening schools with a total enrolment of 40,000; 260 Sunday schools with 28,048 pupils were under the auspices of the Holy Synod. There was one school for adults for every 187,000 inhabitants of the country. The average outlay per pupil amounted to three roubles a year. The Sunday and evening schools were attended chiefly by townspeople.

No schools at all were set up for the peasants, who comprised the bulk of Russia's population.

#### THE DECREE ON THE ABOLITION OF ILLITERACY IN THE R.S.F.S.R.

A series of measures were taken to reorganize public education immediately after the Great October Socialist Revolution and the formation of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic.

In January 1918 the Soviet Government issued decrees providing for better conditions for teachers and abolishing the district and local administrations in charge of public schools. The direction of public education was placed in the hands of the People's Commissariat of Public Education<sup>1</sup> and local supervision was to be carried out by regional and district departments of education. Councils of workers, peasants, teachers and pupils were set up to assist with the organization and supervision of public education. The schools based on class distinction were replaced by a unified type of school, open to all sections of the population. Co-education was introduced.

During this period appropriations from the State budget for the maintenance of all types of school were increased considerably. Pupils were provided with clothes, footwear and hot lunches free of charge.

Much attention was given to the development of schools for the non-Russian peoples. In the Tatar, Udmurt, Chuvash, Mordov, Karelian and other autonomous republics there was rapid expansion of the net-

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1. Ministries of the U.S.S.R., and of the constituent and autonomous republics, were called People's Commissariats until 1947.



work of elementary and secondary schools, in which pupils were taught in their native language. Training courses were established to train local teachers; groups of authors were chosen to draft textbooks in the languages of the different nationalities; alphabets were devised for those peoples who had no written language of their own.

Despite the country's difficult situation owing to the devastation caused by the war, out-of-school education was developed on a large scale with the establishment of public libraries, workers' clubs, schools for the illiterate, and the so-called folk-universities. In order to ensure suitable conditions for cultural and educational work among adults, the Soviet Government authorized the use of primary, secondary and higher schools, when unoccupied, for adult classes, for lectures and talks, and for other cultural activities.

Owing to the absence of statistics for the years 1917 and 1918, a full picture of the network of educational and cultural institutions for adults during that period cannot be presented. However, certain figures published at that time in the magazines *Public Education* and *Out-of-school Education*, indicate a growth in the number of schools for adults, and also of clubs and libraries.

During the period of military intervention and civil war, the effort to abolish illiteracy was hampered by many difficulties: there were not enough teachers, material conditions were unsatisfactory, rooms for study were lacking, and there was an acute shortage of textbooks, paper, pencils and other school equipment. In such circumstances special government measures were needed to solve the problem of eradicating illiteracy. An important role in this matter was played by the decree *On the Abolition of Illiteracy among the Population of the R.S.F.S.R.*, issued by the Soviet Government on 26 December 1919, and signed by Vladimir Lenin, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (Council of Ministers). In this decree it was stated: 'All illiterate inhabitants of the Republic between the ages of 18 and 50 are obliged to learn to read and write in their native tongue, or in the Russian language, as they prefer. Tuition will be given in existing State schools and in those to be established for the illiterate population in accordance with the plans of the People's Commissariat of Education.'

The obligation to learn was of a moral nature, the population was not subjected to any administrative measures. The illiterates were taught by teachers, by office personnel, by senior pupils of secondary schools, by educated workers and farmers, and by servicemen demobilized from the army. In this drive to teach illiterates, the People's Commissariat of Education and its local departments were authorized to employ the services of all educated citizens at rates of pay equivalent to teachers' salaries. Favourable conditions were created for the adults who attended classes. If they were employed, their working day was shortened by two hours without any wage cut as long as they studied. Rooms for study were set aside in clubs, factories and offices. Supply organizations were ordered to give priority to institutions concerned with the eradication of illiteracy. Legal action could be taken against anyone who tried to prevent workers from attending school.

The decree was printed in hundreds of thousands of copies and brought



to the attention of the masses of working people. Posters, slogans and appeals were circulated throughout the country in vast numbers: the whole programme for abolishing illiteracy was based on the population's eager desire for self-development.

At joint meetings with representatives of the local populations, the education departments drafted plans for the abolition of illiteracy in their own localities (village, town or district), drew up lists of the illiterate inhabitants, decided on matters relating to the organization of schools, determined which persons might be enlisted as teachers, and fixed the days and times of study and the length of the courses. In order to prepare teachers and instructors for adult education, short-term preparatory courses were opened in the various regions and districts. A popular slogan at that time was 'Teach the people to read and write at all costs and under all conditions'. The most active workers and peasants (many of whom had only recently learned the three R's) carried on publicity work in factories and in the villages, recruited more and more pupils, and in other ways helped the schools and the teachers. They were called 'activists'.

The working people of Soviet Russia had a great thirst for knowledge. Here is how Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya<sup>1</sup> described the situation in an article which appeared in 1919 in the magazine *Out-of-school Education*:

'The masses have long realized that knowledge is a source of great power. Nowadays it would seem ridiculous to expatiate on the benefits of education. Every day we are told by visiting comrades how the masses are longing for knowledge. In Ivanovo-Voznesensk, factory workers remain in the shop *en masse* to hear a lecture on the history of culture or on political economy; in the Perm district peasants walk 70 versts to town to find out when training courses will be opened; in Petrograd adolescent workers post handwritten appeals to students urging them to help young workers increase their knowledge. And so it is everywhere. The matter now is not to persuade the masses that knowledge is useful but to help them to acquire the knowledge they need and crave for, as quickly as possible. That is why it is so important for the councils to give more attention to out-of-school education'.

The working people's craving for knowledge was evidenced by the fact that shortly after the publication of the decree On the Abolition of Illiteracy among the Population of the R.S.F.S.R., hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants enrolled in the schools for adults or joined the training groups to learn to read and write.

Later, along with the country's economic and technical development and the improvement of living standards, the cultural interests of the working people kept mounting steadily. The people went to grammar schools, to workers' high schools, to general education courses of various types, etc. The workers and peasants realized that in order to master the technique of operating complex machines, or to participate actively in public life (as elected office-bearers in the Soviet, the co-operatives, the

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1. Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya (1869-1939) was the wife of Vladimir Lenin. She was a prominent stateswoman and an outstanding educationalist.

trade unions and other public organizations) they first of all had to learn to read and write.

#### INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS WHICH CONDUCTED THE CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH ADULT ILLITERACY

The effort to abolish illiteracy in the R.S.F.S.R. was guided by the People's Commissariat of Education. In 1918 it set up an Out-of-school Education Department, which was given charge of all the cultural and educational activities throughout the country. This department had one section which supervised the schools for adults. Its functions were: (a) to organize a State system of schools for adults and young people; (b) to work on problems concerning the organization of instruction in these schools and the curricula, teaching methods and textbooks to be adopted; (c) to help the regional and district departments of public education in the matter of properly organizing the instruction of adults and young people; (d) to establish model out-of-school educational institutions.

Local supervision of the literacy campaign was the responsibility of the local departments of public education and of their out-of-school education sections.

The agencies of public education planned the network of schools and determined the enrolment for each year in these schools, exercised State control with respect to the progress of the literacy programme and the methods of teaching; watched over the quality of instruction, supervised the training, advancement and guidance of the teachers, specialists in teaching methods and organizers concerned with the abolition of illiteracy, and issued school-books, equipment, syllabuses and handbooks on methodology.

On 19 June 1920 a special organization was founded to direct the programme for abolishing adult illiteracy. The full name of this organization was the All-Russia Extraordinary Commission for the Eradication of Illiteracy. It supervised the education of illiterates for several years.

The commission included representatives of various State and public organizations and it had extensive rights and powers. The organization worked hard to stamp out illiteracy, carried on publicity work among the masses with a view to drawing them into the schools, registered the illiterates and semi-literates, and helped to draft methods of instruction and to prepare primers and other textbooks. It enlisted a large number of people with adequate education to help with the programme.

After the establishment of the All-Russia Extraordinary Commission for the Eradication of Illiteracy in the capital, local special commissions for the eradication of illiteracy were formed in all the regional and district departments of public education.

When the commission was abolished in the second half of the thirties, literacy committees were created and attached to the Soviets in the towns, town districts and villages. The membership of these committees consisted of deputies of the local Soviet, teachers, outstanding pupils of the adult schools, librarians, village-club managers, and distinguished



workers and collective farmers. Various duties were allotted to the members of the sections; some engaged in publicity work with a view to drawing adults into the schools, while others kept track of school-work progress, established the reasons for non-attendance of pupils, and took steps to eliminate the causes. When adults were unable to attend school for certain reasons (small children to look after, long distance from the school, etc.), members of the committees assigned persons qualified for the job to coach such adults at home, obtained books and other requisites for this purpose. The organization of individual training was an important innovation for persons who wanted to learn but could not go to school because they had too much domestic work to do or children to look after, because school hours coincided with their work hours, or because they lived too far from the school. In fact, towards the end of the thirties, when the country was completing the task of abolishing illiteracy and only a scattered number of individuals remained untaught in some of the villages, educating such people formed the main activity of the sections. The only way to teach them was to give them instruction individually, or in small groups of two or three persons.

It was the function of the members of the committees to see that the departments of public education were prompt in supplying the schools for adults with syllabuses and handbooks on teaching methods, and in instructing the teachers thoroughly; to see that the directors of factories and State farms, the managing boards of collective farms and the trade union organizations provided premises, light and equipment (tables, desks, blackboards, etc.) for the adult schools; and to see that favourable conditions for regular school attendance were created.

With the aid of club and library facilities, the members of these committees, in co-operation with teachers and with trade union and 'Komsomol' (Young Communist League) organizations, arranged readings of fiction for adult pupils, lectures and talks on political and labour subjects or on sanitation and hygiene problems, arranged excursions to museums, exhibitions and so forth, established itinerant libraries, and ensured that the bookstores always had an adequate supply of textbooks, exercise books, writing materials, etc.

In addition, the committees exercised control over the proper use of the funds allocated for the eradication of illiteracy, seeing to it that none of the money was used for other purposes. At their meetings they heard the reports of the public education department, of trade union and co-operative organizations and of local enterprises on the progress of the literacy campaign. In turn the committees gave an account of their activities at presidium or plenary meetings of the Soviet, and at local public meetings.

The GCTU (All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions) and the local trade union committees in industrial enterprises made a most important contribution to the wiping out of illiteracy. It was the concern of the trade unions to provide premises for schools and training centres, to keep the schools heated and lighted, to register the illiterates and semi-literates, to encourage them to attend the schools, to keep records of attendance, to see that the workers were given full opportunity by the management to attend school, and so forth. The trade unions also contri-

buted to the task, supplying the pupils with school-books and materials and paying the teachers. Their solicitude was extended not only to union members, but also to their families, who were likewise offered every opportunity to get some schooling.

In 1923, a public society called Down with Illiteracy was founded to promote the government's programme to eradicate illiteracy. Membership of this society was open to all citizens of the R.S.F.S.R. from the age of 18 upwards, who were willing to take part in its work and to pay membership dues. Young people between 14 and 17 years of age were also admitted if they were employed in an industrial enterprise or an office. Children under 14 could become Friends of the Society. The main object of the Down with Illiteracy society was to organize the education of illiterates in country districts. It set up local branches in villages, factories and institutions, whose task was to help abolish illiteracy in their own localities. In addition to its direct object of helping to teach illiterate and semi-literate people, the society published primers and other appropriate textbooks.

In 1924 the society tackled its job in all regions and districts. The person elected chairman of the society was Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin, chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (now called the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet). The election of such an outstanding statesman (the President of the Republic) showed how much importance was attached to the abolition of illiteracy throughout the country. Although he was very busy with matters of state, Mikhail Kalinin systematically directed the society's endeavours and guided the activities of hundreds of thousands of volunteers, who performed the functions of educators free of charge, as social work. These volunteers were called 'soldiers of culture'.

The Komsomol was particularly active in the campaign. They launched the slogan 'Let the educated teach the uneducated'. The Komsomol began by ensuring that there was no illiteracy in its own ranks. For that purpose their organizations appointed organizers whose responsibility it was to follow the progress of the members and to help them with their studies if necessary.

Much was done by the Komsomol to draw young people who were not members of the league into the schools. Explanatory talks were given and exhibits were arranged to show the rate of accomplishment in educating members and non-members of the league. Members of the Komsomol were singled out to receive training in the departments of public education, thus preparing them for activities concerned with the eradication of illiteracy.

In 1928, the Komsomol initiated a mass public movement called the 'Cultural Campaign'. Its aim was to combat illiteracy and backwardness and to raise the cultural standards of the people. The campaign lasted for more than three years. Educational establishments and whole towns and districts joined the movement. In each district the local Komsomol organizations selected groups of between 5 and 30 persons, called shock-brigades, which undertook:

1. To ensure fulfilment of the programme for eliminating illiteracy in their particular areas.

2. To keep track of class attendance in the area's schools for adults and to recruit educated people to coach them.
3. To draw illiterates and semi-literates into political-educational activities by means of conversations, excursions, newspaper readings and readers' conferences.
4. To collect public contributions.
5. To arrange talks and lectures about the cultural revolution and the activities of the Down with Illiteracy society, to organize anti-illiteracy meetings, to publish newspapers dealing with problems of the literacy campaign, and to organize nursery play centres for the children of mothers attending school.

Throughout the country various public organizations, national and provincial newspapers, statesmen, prominent writers, scientists and educationalists, intellectually advanced workers and peasants and students and schoolchildren joined the cultural crusade.

A number of organizations gave teaching assignments to some of their employees, as a form of social work, and set aside funds to pay professional teachers. Newspapers reported the progress of the cultural-educational movement and urged the working people to participate actively.

The Down with Illiteracy society printed single issues of newspapers, such as *Cultural Campaign* (319,000 copies), *For a Cultural Revolution* (200,000 copies), *Help the Schools* (35,000 copies), *Learn to Read and Write* (15,000 copies), and *Building up Culture* (35,000 copies). A competition was organized to determine which of the society's local branches was most efficient, and which was the best school for adult illiterates.

During the period in question primers, charts for teaching the alphabet and sets of cardboard letters of the alphabet were circulated in millions of copies. Syllabuses and instructions on teaching methods for the teaching of illiterates and semi-literates were printed in tens and hundreds of thousands of copies. Books were published in 25 of the national languages of the Soviet Union. All this work was supervised by the People's Commissariat of Education and its local departments.

During the years of the Cultural Campaign millions of people learned to read and write. In the school year 1928/29 instruction was given to more than two million persons, in 1929/30 to eight million, and in 1930/31 to eleven million. Over forty million persons went through the schools and training centres during the 15 years after the enactment of the decree on the abolition of illiteracy. The period of the Cultural Campaign accounted for more than a half of this number. Upward of fourteen million persons received schooling as a result of the work of the Down with Illiteracy society.

In order to help create favourable conditions for the abolition of illiteracy among women, nurseries, kindergartens and play centres were established during the crusade so that women with families could also go to school.

In addition to the work done on the teaching of illiterates, a great effort was made, particularly from 1927 onwards, to provide further education for semi-literates. This was essential if these people were not to fall back into illiteracy. Those who had gone only to a school for illiterates were not sufficiently proficient in reading and writing. After



finishing the course, they devoted little time to reading and writing and therefore soon forgot what they had learned. But those who proceeded to the next stage and continued their studies in a school for semi-literates broadened their general education and made fuller use of it in their everyday life. They read newspapers and books pertaining to their occupation, wrote letters, applied their knowledge of arithmetic at home and on the job, contributed items for newspapers, etc. The graduates of the schools for semi-literates eagerly became members of libraries, joined various clubs and took part in social work. All this precluded their falling back into illiteracy.

A fact that should be noted particularly is that the success of the campaign to wipe out illiteracy in the U.S.S.R. was due to the active participation in the programme of the mass of the population. By 1924/25 the Down with Illiteracy society already had a membership of 1,600,000.

To gain the active support of the public, the People's Commissariat of Education organized congresses and conferences, both in the capital and in the provinces, on the problem of eradicating illiteracy and semi-literacy. The people invited included not only professional and volunteer teachers, specialists in teaching methods and public education officials but also representatives of party and public organizations and industrial executives.

Discussions at these conferences dealt with matters pertaining to organization, such as the carrying out of the anti-illiteracy programme and ways of improving the work, and questions of method, such as the programmes and methods for instructing illiterates and semi-literates, individual and group coaching, ways of preventing regression to illiteracy, the application of methodological principles, manuals and handbooks on methodology, etc.

A significant point was that the entire effort to raise the population's cultural standard was co-ordinated in a single plan, administered by the People's Commissariat of Education. This eliminated duplication of work by the great number of institutions and organizations engaged in educational and cultural activities (public education authorities, the trade unions, the Komsomol, the co-operative organizations, and so forth). The unified plan defined the functions and duties of each of the organizations.

The number of illiterate and semi-literate adults to be taught, and the network of schools established for this purpose, were estimated each year for every district, region and republic. When the departments of education worked out the programmes of work to be done, they took into consideration the size and composition of the population, the number of towns and villages and the distance between them, the cultural level and economic status of the population, and other factors. In drawing up the plans, they determined how many illiterate and semi-literate persons would be offered schooling by the trade unions and the Down with Illiteracy society.

Another essential factor was the eagerness of all the organizations concerned to carry out the programme in the best and most expeditious way. Republics, regions, districts, schools, teachers and pupils vied with each other to do a better job. For instance, the Siberian and North

Caucasian regions entered into a socialist contest for the best achievement in eradicating illiteracy during the school year of 1929/30. The competing regions undertook to (a) teach 450,000 illiterates and 90,000 semi-literates during the school year of 1929/30, and (b) abolish illiteracy among workers in industry and on the State farms, youths of pre-military age, collective farmers, women engaged in social work, and all trade union members in towns and industrial settlements, by May 1930.

Each of the participating regions undertook to enlist the help of at least 50,000 volunteers to teach the illiterates and semi-literates. These volunteers had to take a preparatory course before the beginning of the school year. In addition, the workers in each region pledged themselves to improve the training of teachers and volunteers, to raise the local membership of the Down with Illiteracy society to 350,000, and to have branches of the society in every village and State farm, and in all the big collective farms.

# Organization of education for illiterate and semi-literate adults<sup>1</sup>

## THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

For the teaching of illiterate and semi-literate adults, two types of school were established: (a) schools for illiterates, and (b) schools for semi-literates.

The education offered by schools for illiterates was approximately equivalent to that of the first two grades of elementary school, while that offered by schools for semi-literates corresponded to the four grades of an elementary school. The schools for illiterates enrolled adults (a) who could neither read nor write; (b) who could read but not write, or who wrote with frequent omission of many letters. The schools for semi-literates enrolled adults (a) who could read in their native language or in Russian and could write without frequent omission of letters, but did not know arithmetic, or who could count only up to 1,000, or could do written addition, subtraction, multiplication and division only with units; (b) who had finished a school for illiterates, or had as much knowledge as such a school could offer.

Furthermore, so-called training centres for abolishing illiteracy were established in such places where the number of illiterates was less than twenty. The programme and the curriculum in these centres were the same as in the schools for illiterate or semi-literate adults.

Where illiterates and semi-literates were taught individually or in small groups (from three to five persons) the teaching was done by a 'soldier of culture' under the guidance of the district specialist in teaching methods. District specialists were usually teachers in primary or secondary schools who had been trained in educational theory and teaching methods.

## PUBLICIZING THE VALUE OF EDUCATION AND RECRUITING STUDENTS

At the time when schools and training centres for the eradication of illiteracy were set up, a great deal of publicity work among adult illiterates was needed in order to draw them into the schools, since many did not believe they could ever learn to read and write.

To arouse their interest, the importance of education was explained

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1. By A. M. Ivanova.



to them individually and in small groups, and also at meetings. At special evening meetings, audiences were often addressed by former illiterates who had recently mastered the three R's. They recounted how they had studied in school, and explained how helpful their ability to read, write and count had been to them in their everyday life. They read stories, recited poetry and took part in musical entertainments.

In factories, wall-newspapers gave a great deal of space to the importance of education. Factory workers who finished school were awarded prizes and promoted to better jobs, and their names were posted on the roll of honour.

#### REGISTRATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF ILLITERATES

The first step in organizing the literacy campaign was to register all the illiterate adults in the towns and villages. In industrial enterprises this was done by the trade union organizations. The registration of persons not employed in any institution (housewives, domestic servants, etc.) was supervised by the departments of public education. The help of many teachers, senior pupils, students, workers and non-manual employees was enlisted for this work.

The purpose of the registration was not only to determine the number of illiterates in each community, but also to obtain pertinent information about each person: name and address, age, number of children in the family, occupation, place of employment, participation in social work, domestic conditions, and, finally, the most suitable time for studies (morning or evening and at what hours). It was necessary to know all this in order to make the most convenient arrangements for the pupils.

Educational attainments and aptitudes, which varied widely, were ascertained and groups were formed of persons whose standards of learning were approximately the same. The practice of forming mixed groups was abandoned because those who lagged behind the rest of the class soon lost interest and left the school, as did those who were more advanced and did not care to waste time repeating what they already knew. Usually the pupils were divided into the following groups: (a) the totally illiterate; (b) those who could read, but could not write or count; (c) those who could read and write, but did not know arithmetic.

Wherever the number of illiterates who did not fit into any of the above-mentioned categories was too low to form a whole class, volunteer teachers instructed the pupils individually or in small groups of two or three persons. This form of instruction was most valuable to women who could not go to school because they had children to look after.

In grouping adults, other factors besides their degree of knowledge were taken into account: their age, and also their living and working conditions. The age of the pupils had to be reckoned with because elderly people often felt ashamed of their inability to read and write. They felt more embarrassed when grouped with young people who grasped and learned things better than they could. But when they were grouped with pupils of about the same age they felt more at ease and enjoyed attending school. Classes were held in the day-time for those

who worked on night shift and in the evening for those who worked during the day. In the north where the peoples led a nomadic life, teachers accompanied the nomads as they roamed from place to place.

The information gathered in the process of registering the illiterates, made it possible to estimate the approximate time needed to abolish illiteracy in every farm, factory, village and town and to work out the plans accordingly.

# Curricula and syllabuses of the schools for illiterate and semi-literate adults<sup>1</sup>

## CURRICULA

In the early years of the literacy campaign (1919-22) the period of instruction at the training centres was three months. Later the period was increased because experience showed that pupils were unable to master sufficiently the techniques of reading, writing and counting in such a short time. Without practice, even those who had done well at the school soon forgot what they had learned.

As was mentioned earlier, it was decided that ground covered in the schools for illiterates should be equivalent to the first two grades of elementary school, and that the schooling for semi-literates in one year should be equivalent to the next two grades of elementary school.

It was also the task of these schools to teach the adult pupils how to make use of newspapers, libraries and radio, and to give them a certain amount of instruction in geography, history and general knowledge about their native country, since these things would be helpful to them as they furthered their own education and as they took part in the life of the community.

Classes were conducted along the lines of the approved syllabuses. At the end of the school year the pupils took examinations and if they passed them successfully, received a certificate to show that they had mastered the minimum programme of general education.

The curricula of the urban and rural schools for adult illiterates and semi-literates were based on schedules of 330 and 336 hours respectively. In towns, the school year lasted 10 months. There were 11 school days in each month, with three hours of study each day ( $10 \times 11 \times 3 = 330$  hours). In rural communities the duration of the school year was 7 months with 12 four-hour school days a month ( $7 \times 12 \times 4 = 336$  hours). In both types of school, studies continued throughout the school year without a break. Class periods were of 45 minutes.

Two subjects (mother tongue and arithmetic) were taught in the schools for illiterates, and three subjects (mother tongue, arithmetic and geography) in the schools for semi-literates. The yearly total of school hours was distributed approximately as follows:

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1. By A. M. Ivanova.



	1st half-year	2nd half-year	Total
<i>Schools for illiterates</i>			
Mother tongue	109	91	200
Arithmetic	56	74	130
Total	165	165	330
<i>Schools for semi-literates</i>			
Mother tongue	90	55	145
Arithmetic	75	50	125
Geography	—	60	60
Total	165	165	330

In 1936 the study of the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. was introduced in the adult schools. An additional two hours a week were set aside for these lessons. The curricula were flexible, allowing for special arrangements for the various groups of pupils according to their level of development.

Totally illiterate adults, who could neither read, write nor count, were required to take the whole 10-month course. In groups where the pupils were able to read but not to write, or able to read and write but did not know arithmetic, the period of studies was sometimes reduced, depending on the range of the pupils' knowledge. In the first of these groups less time was devoted to reading, and in the second group, less time to reading and writing.

The adult schools were expected to prepare their pupils for active and responsible participation in industrial, social and political life by developing their abilities to speak, read and write in their native language, to make simple calculations, etc.

#### SYLLABUSES

The syllabuses adopted in 1936 for illiterates and for semi-literates were made up as follows:

##### 1. *Schools for illiterates*

##### *Russian language (200 hours)*

*Reading.* Ability: to read a short story or article aloud observing the correct pauses; to read a written text in the primer, or a text written by the teacher on a blackboard; to answer a simple question asked by the teacher with reference to the text; to read an article from *The Peasant Newspaper for New Readers*, or from the local paper, and to outline its contents; to understand the words used in the text.

*Writing.* Ability: to write legibly between two lines with proper spacing between letters and words; to write separate short sentences without omis-

sion of letters or syllables, or the addition of extra letters, and to end the sentence with a period; to apply elementary rules of orthography in writing (beginning of sentences and proper nouns with a capital letter, use of the soft sign between letters and at the end of words, syllabic division, etc.); to write common political and occupational terms ('revolution', 'community', 'combine-harvester', etc.); to write down one's ideas, to write addresses properly, to fill in questionnaires, and to answer a simple question in writing.

### *Arithmetic* (130 hours)

Ability: to read and write six-figure numbers and round millions; to add and subtract whole numbers; to multiply and divide whole numbers by single digits and by 10, by 100 and by 1,000. A knowledge of metrical measures of length, weight and volume, of measures of time and of fractions and percentages.

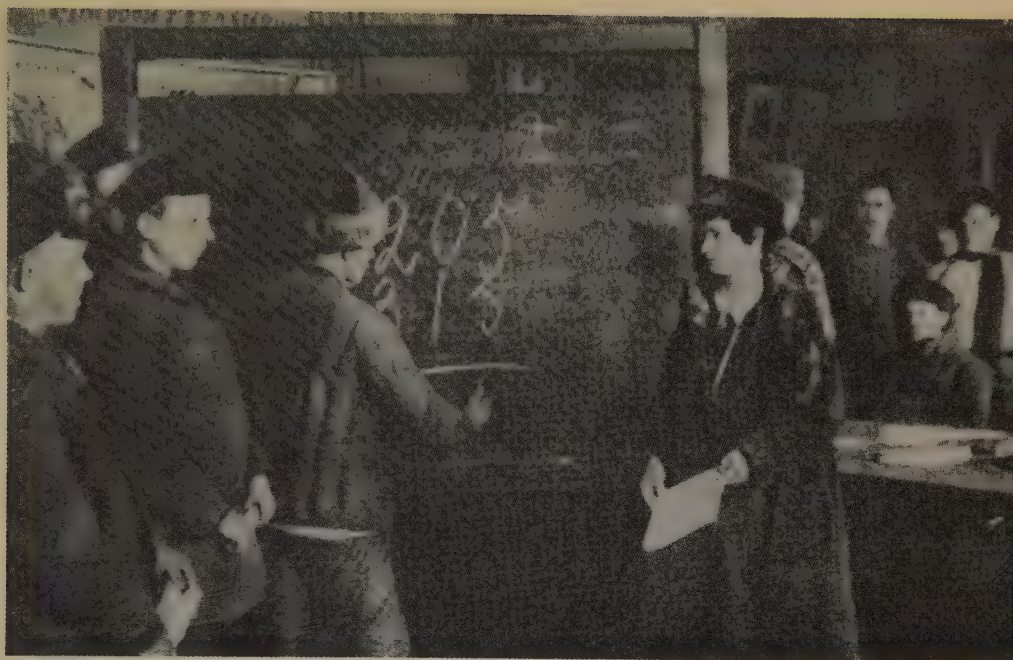
## *2. Schools for semi-literates*

### *Russian language* (145 hours)

*Reading.* Ability: to read aloud fluently and intelligently without faltering or distorting words and with the correct intonation corresponding to the punctuation marks (period, question and exclamation marks, etc.); to observe the rules of accent; to read a passage silently and then re-tell the story and a knowledge of how to use books and to refer correctly to the author, title, year of publication, and of how to use the index; to read newspapers, to know where to find the information required, and to understand the meaning of the headlines, editorials, dispatches and reports; to explain briefly the contents of a newspaper; to find the meaning of unfamiliar words in a dictionary.

*Speech and drafting.* Ability: to write letters, applications, receipts, formal statements, bills and records of proceedings; to answer questions aptly; to draft the outline of a speech; to write an item for a newspaper; to describe an incident; to give a written or oral opinion about a motion picture, play or book. Improvement of vocabulary by learning words that frequently appear in papers, in political literature and in popular-science magazines.

*Writing, orthography and grammar.* Improvement of writing technique (writing legibly in a straight line without omissions or the insertion of extra letters); ability to copy extracts from articles or novels without making any errors; to understand what a sentence is, the relationship of words in a sentence with respect to meaning, the capital letter at the beginning of a sentence and the period at the end, interrogative and exclamatory sentences; independent and auxiliary words, prepositions, divided writing of prepositions; the capital letter in proper nouns (names, patronymics, surnames, countries, regions, districts, cities, villages, streets, rivers, seas, and names of institutions, enterprises, newspapers, magazines and books); familiarity with compound abbreviations



*The first sums at the age of 18.*



*Writing his first word at the age of 65.*



('U.S.S.R.', 'CPSU',<sup>1</sup> etc.) and understanding of their meaning; sounds and letters, vowels and consonants, the alphabet, names of letters, division of words into syllables; the soft sign (ь) within and at the end of words; accentuation of words, pronunciation of words that are often accented wrongly, the correct writing of unaccented vowels; sentence structure (the main elements of a sentence—subject and predicate and accessory elements), simple and compound sentences; word composition, prepositions and prefixes (prepositions are written separately and prefixes are attached to words); prefixes *ot-* *pod-*, *nad-*, the use of ь as a dividing symbol after prefixes; general understanding of the main parts of speech according to their function (noun, adjective, verb); nouns designating animate and inanimate objects, noun genders, noun modifications dependent on words with which they are associated in the sentence, use of the soft sign (ь) after sibilants and in feminine nouns; agreement of adjectives; verb forms—tense, person and number.

### *Arithmetic* (125 hours)

Reading and writing of whole numbers up to the billions; adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing whole numbers; simple fractions, reduction of fractions, addition and subtraction of fractions, multiplication and division of fractions; finding a part of a whole, and a whole by its part; numeration, addition and subtraction of decimal fractions, multiplication and division of a decimal fraction by a whole number; calculating percentages, areas of squares and rectangles and the volume of a rectangular room.

### *Geography* (60 hours)

*What is geography and why should it be studied?* Significance of geography (educational, practical and political).

*The earth as a planet.* Concept of the horizon, limits of the horizon and orientation in space, broadening of the horizon as one ascends; shape of the earth, proofs that the earth is a sphere, the globe—a model of the earth; the earth's rotation about its axis and revolution around the sun, the resulting phenomena, the earth's daily rotation, day and night, the poles and the equator; inclination of the earth's axis, the seasons, changes in the length of day and night during the year, the sun as the source of warmth and energy (and all life) on earth, the solar system, the earth's position in the solar system, former notions about the earth; milestones of the evolution of ideas about the earth (Copernicus, Bruno, Galileo); the solar system as a part of the universe; stars and planets; the earth as a planet.

*Charts and maps.* Perception of a chart, ways of making and using a chart; the chart and the map; a representation of the earth on a global map and on hemisphere maps; geographical lines, parallels and meridians, latitude and longitude, elementary knowledge of how to use geographical lines;

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1. Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

distribution of land and water surfaces on the globe; parts of the world—Europe, Asia, Africa, America (North and South), Australia and Antarctic; oceans—Pacific, Atlantic, Indian and Arctic; seas, gulfs and straits: seas—Baltic, Black, Mediterranean; gulfs and bays—Gulf of Mexico, Bay of Biscay, Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Finland.

*The earth's crust.* The outer shell of the earth (the hard crust and the gaseous atmosphere), the inner structure of the earth, the structure of the crust, igneous and sedimentary rocks, volcanoes, earthquakes; features of the earth's surface (lowlands, highlands, plateaux and mountains), their representation on a map, formation of avalanches and glaciers in mountainous areas; the earth's mineral resources, main sources of energy and raw materials; map studies of the surface features of parts of the world; Europe (the lowlands of Eastern Europe, Germany and France, the Alps, the Carpathian, Ural and Caucasian mountains); Asia (the West Siberian, Turansk and Chinese lowlands, the mountainous region of the Pamirs, the Tien Shan mountains and the Himalayas); America (the Mississippi and Amazon lowlands, the Rocky and Allegheny mountains).

*Oceans, seas, rivers and lakes.* Oceans and seas, the depth of oceans, the salinity of sea-water, freezing of seas, ice ridges and hummocks, sea currents (warm and cold), high and low tides, broken coastlines (bays, straits, peninsulas, islands); significance of the seas as waterways and fisheries, the main seaways and the struggle to win them, opening up the Northern Sea Route, Papanin's expedition to the North Pole; seas—Mediterranean, Black, Caspian, Baltic, Japanese; peninsulas—Scandinavian, Iberian, Apennine, Balkan, Crimean, Indian, Indo-China, Kamchatka; islands—Greenland, Great Britain, Sunda, Japanese islands, Oceania; straits—Gibraltar, Dardanelles, Bosphorus, Bering; canals—Suez and Panama; terrestrial waters (ground water, springs); rivers—the Volga with its tributaries, the Oka and the Kama, Dnieper, Danube, Rhine, Ob, Yenisei, Lena, Amur, Nile, Mississippi, Amazon—sources of rivers and direction of flow, rivers as waterways and as sources of power and irrigation, canals, the destructive and creative effects of water (gorges deltas, islands); lakes—Ladoga, Onega, Aral, Baikal, Balkash—flowing and non-flowing, salt and fresh.

*Climate.* The weather and its elements, temperature, wind and precipitation, the concept of climate, the effect of climate on economy, combating harmful climatic factors; the different heights to which the sun rises over the horizon in different parts of the world, the division of the earth into five zones; uneven distribution of temperature on land and sea, maritime and continental climates, the effect of ocean currents on the climate, the effect on climate of altitude (mountain climates), distribution of rainfall on the earth, wet regions, the world's deserts.

*The earth's soil and vegetation belts.* The influence of climate on soils, vegetation and animal life, their zonal distribution, the polar regions, the tundra, forests, steppes, semi-deserts, subtropics, tropical jungles and savannas; characteristics of the zones, the plants and animals in each

of the zones; former and present use of natural resources by man, how the use of natural resources is influenced by science and engineering and the social system of a country (capitalist and socialist).

*The world's population.* The inhabited and uninhabited parts of the world, the population of the world, its distribution over different parts of the earth, races, the falsity of the teaching about superior and inferior races, density of the population, the most densely populated areas of the world.

In addition to physical geography, pupils of the schools for semi-literates studied the themes: 'National divisions of the world today' and 'A brief survey of the U.S.S.R.'. The former theme familiarized the pupils with the location, the borders, the State system and the economy of foreign countries. The same topics, with reference to the U.S.S.R., were treated in 'A brief survey of the U.S.S.R.'.

It would have been wrong to limit the course for semi-literate adults to physical geography alone. Since the adult pupils read papers and were interested in the policy and economics of their own homeland, and of foreign countries, these two themes were also included in the course.

Being unaccustomed to reading books independently, the uneducated adults needed the teacher's assistance in order to understand the whole geography course. For this reason the teacher had to choose the main points, explain them in a lively way that would arouse interest, and bring into play various kinds of visual aids such as, the globe, maps, pictures, lantern slides and films. Motion pictures were especially helpful in giving the pupils clear and graphic perceptions of the subjects and in stimulating ideas.

#### ORGANIZATION OF STUDIES

The basic form of teaching in the schools for illiterate and semi-literate adults was the class lesson during which all, or most of the pupils, were engaged in the same activity at the same time. This meant that the pupils had to be divided into homogeneous groups.

The lessons were varied in type and structure: at one lesson new material would be explained and followed by exercises and interrogation; at another, previous lessons would be repeated; and at a third the pupils would be given check-up assignments to test their knowledge. The typical lesson, however, included all the elements: a check-up on homework, explanation of new material, exercises to consolidate earlier training, review of the exercises, and finally an assignment of homework.

So as not to waste time in class, the teacher prepared each lesson carefully, defined the theme of the lesson, prepared articles for reading and a list of questions for discussion (particularly with relation to facts and events familiar to the pupils), selected or devised problems and examples, gave thought to the methods of conducting the lesson, determined the time to be allotted for questions and explanations, etc.

Most careful planning was required of teachers in charge of heterogeneous groups. As the programme for the abolition of illiteracy drew



to its close, more and more such groups had to be formed. The pupils of a heterogeneous class were instructed either individually, or in small subgroups of two, three or four persons. The teacher drew up a separate plan of lessons for each subgroup.

In order to stimulate the adult's interest in studies the form of instruction was such as to make him feel that his newly acquired knowledge would help him to live a fuller life. He learned how to write a letter, a receipt or an application, how to work out his production quota and his earnings. He was able to read newspapers, make a record of meeting proceedings, prepare a report, write an item for the paper, and do many other things which he was unable to do before. When the teacher based lessons on instruction material with which the pupils were familiar, they attended class more willingly. For instance, a worker found more satisfaction doing arithmetic problems which dealt with items relating to his particular factory or job. A collective farmer found it interesting to solve problems involving the estimation of work done in a field, a market garden or a cattle shed. Aware of this, the teachers endeavoured to familiarize themselves with the work in which their pupils were engaged. A pupil who did not feel that his education helped him to cope with his daily problems, soon lost interest in attending class.

It was therefore important to teach the adults to read and write in the shortest possible period and especially to make the teaching matter as concrete as possible with particular stress on the practical significance of the exercises. This also took into account the fact that, in contrast to children, adults find it much harder to memorize what they do not understand thoroughly.

One of the concerns of the teacher was to get his adult pupils into the habit of reading newspapers. This was done by reading some interesting item in a newspaper and then holding a discussion on the topic. Usually the paper read in class was *The Peasant Newspaper for New Readers*. The teacher familiarized the pupils with the arrangement of the material (editorial, local articles, latest news, film and play reviews, etc.), and showed them how to find places mentioned in the paper on a map.

Every effort was made to impress on the pupils the need to read books as a means of broadening their general knowledge, and their political and professional outlook. Small booklets for beginners, printed in large type, well illustrated and dealing with social, political, popular-science and technical subjects, were used for this purpose.

To stimulate the pupils' interest in books, the teacher would read a chapter of some interesting book and then hold a discussion on the subject. Or he would bring several books to class, briefly explain the titles and contents, and offer them to the pupils to read at home. Later some of the pupils were asked to tell the class what they had read, or to submit a short review of the book in writing.

To show them how to find the books they wanted in a catalogue, the pupils were taken to visit a public library.

By reading newspapers and books and then discussing the topics, the pupils enlarged their vocabulary and improved their powers of expression. This is illustrated with concrete examples and described in greater detail in the next chapter.

The knowledge of the pupils finishing the schools for adult illiterates and semi-literates was tested by examinations conducted by the teacher in the presence of a representative of the department of education. Quite often they were also attended by representatives of the Komsomol, trade unions and other public organizations.

The tests were conducted according to instructions worked out by the agencies of public education. In the schools for illiterates there were oral and written examinations in the mother tongue and arithmetic; in the schools for semi-literates there were oral and written examinations in the mother tongue and arithmetic and oral examinations in geography.

For the reading examination, the material used in the schools for illiterates was *The Peasant Newspaper for New Readers*, or else booklets of the series called *The Library of a New Reader*. An easy text with familiar words, which had not been read by the pupil before, was chosen for the test. The pupil was given a short story or a fragment ranging from 10 to 25 lines. The pupil read the text first to himself and then aloud. The teacher then asked him two or three control questions and asked him to relate what he had read in his own words. The teacher took note of the pupil's main reading defects. If the pupil failed to understand what he had read because his reading technique was poor, he was required to continue his studies until he fully mastered the technique of reading.

To demonstrate his writing ability, the pupil was asked to write something independently, and also to take dictation. The independent writing assignment comprised answering questions, or writing the addresses of the school and of the pupil's home and place of work, or in drafting a short application. The dictation exercise consisted of 15 to 25 words, which had to be written in accordance with the orthographic rules that had been studied during the course. The text was simple in content and structure. Examples: 'The school has subscribed to a newspaper. We have been reading Lenin's speeches. I wrote an item for the paper. We love our country.' A pupil who omitted letters or distorted words when writing down a dictated text was likewise required to continue his studies until he had learned how to write properly.

When examining a pupil in arithmetic, the teacher paid most attention to matters of practical significance: Can he write down a date? Does he know metric measures and the four rules of arithmetic? Can he do the simple operations taught during the course? The pupil was given a problem consisting of one or two questions, preferably relating to his occupation, and necessarily involving multiplication and division. The pupil who failed to pass the test in arithmetic was also expected to stay on at school until he had acquired the necessary skills.

At finishing examinations in the schools for semi-literates pupils were given a more difficult text to read, and were expected to write a composition on a given subject. This subject theme might be connected with an article or story that had been read during oral examinations, or the pupil might be asked to describe his work, to relate how he had spent a holiday, to describe a play or film he had seen, etc.

The dictation exercise consisted of 65-70 words and required a

knowledge of all the orthographical rules studied during the course.

The arithmetic examination was designed to test the pupil's ability to carry out operations with whole numbers and decimal fractions, to solve problems involving whole numbers and vulgar fractions, to calculate the area and volume of simple geometric figures, and to analyse the figures of records, summaries and accounts—in other words to test their ability to put their knowledge to practical use. The written test included two or three problems and operations based on materials relating to the pupil's occupation, and several examples involving whole numbers and decimal fractions. Those who failed in the tests had to continue their studies until they reached the required standard.

The purpose of the examination in geography (oral only) was to test and evaluate the pupil's ability to use a map, their knowledge of the geographical terms listed in the programme, and their ability to apply their geographical knowledge when reading newspapers. The pupil was usually asked two questions on the geography of the U.S.S.R. and of foreign countries. The questions were such as to ascertain his knowledge in both political and mathematical geography. For pupils who failed in the examination, special groups were formed for additional studies on the particular subjects in which they were weak.

All adults who finished the schools for illiterates and semi-literates were given certificates.



# Methods of teaching reading and writing to adults<sup>1</sup>

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF METHOD

One of the main factors, among many others, that determine a pupil's progress is the method of instruction. How is one to determine which teaching methods are good and which are bad? How does the 'good' method differ from the 'bad' one?

It is obvious that the good method must enable the pupil to learn easily and quickly. He should understand what he reads and should read correctly, fluently and with expression. His writing should be legible and grammatical. But no less important are the other features of a good method, which, unfortunately, are often overlooked. The method must be a simple one which even a teacher with little experience can apply easily. It must not conflict with the pupil's psychology, and must not make him do tedious work in a mechanical way. It should be a method that stimulates the pupil and encourages him to work on his reading and writing lessons independently.

A bad method makes it hard for an illiterate person to learn to read. It undermines his self-reliance and gets him into the habit of repeating lessons by rote. This leads to slow, mechanical reading without understanding, to careless, ungrammatical writing, and to an eventual relapse into illiteracy.

The right method of instruction is not invented—it is not a product of imagination. It stems from the school's objectives and from the problems that naturally crop up in the process of education. In developing the proper method of instruction, the following factors must be taken into account: (a) the general aims of the school; (b) the psychology of adult pupils; (c) the psychology and physiology involved in the reading and writing processes; (d) the structure and peculiarities of the Russian language and its orthography.

To understand and correctly apply teaching methods, one must first be acquainted with some of the factors relating to educational psychology and the science of language, on which they are founded.

## THE PECULIAR TRAITS OF ADULT PUPILS

The schools for illiterate and semi-literate adults were attended by heterogeneous groups, including workers, collective farmers, young

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1. By V. D. Voskresensky.

people, housewives, etc. Each of these groups had certain particular features which the teacher had to take into account. But first he had to discover the general features common to all groups of adult pupils.

Since he had to deal with grown-up people, he had to take into consideration their specific traits. For example, it is more in the nature of an adult than of a child to learn things consciously and intelligently. This is an important factor because every lesson can either be learnt consciously with understanding, or it can be learnt mechanically without understanding as children often memorize poems: they repeat the lines over and over again without thinking of their meaning, sometimes distorting the words. Such mechanical types of learning always require more time and energy than the sensible way of memorizing by understanding the meaning.

When the content of a quotation or of verses and all the expressions used are fully understood, memorizing is an easy matter. This applies not only to verbal memorizing (poems, quotations, foreign words, etc.), but to all other lessons as well.

In one sense, any skill, no matter how it is acquired, eventually becomes 'automatic'. When a certain action is repeated very often, it no longer requires a great deal of effort and attention, but proceeds mechanically. A pupil learning to write stops to think how to write each word, whereas an educated person writes any word without hesitating. This has led some teachers into the error of thinking that if well-educated people can read, write and use the multiplication tables automatically (mechanically), the mechanical way is the best way to teach pupils to read, write and count. Pupils are thus told to learn the multiplication tables by rote, to copy whole pages out of books, to memorize whole words visually like drawings, and so on.

This is obviously a wrong system. It makes learning slower and harder for the pupil and the results are poorer: he memorizes some words but cannot read others; in one case he will write a word correctly, in another he will make an error.

All this is especially significant with respect to adults. A child can absorb many things mechanically and rather easily (children often remember whole phrases when they hear adults speak, without knowing what those phrases mean). Moreover, a child does not dislike repeating the same thing over and over again, as is borne out by the fact that children can listen to the same story many times.

But adults, especially older people, often lack the child's aptitude for learning mechanically. This has been confirmed experimentally by scientists. Another thing, of extreme importance, is that adults do mechanical work which they do not understand with reluctance; they find it tedious and tiresome, and if they encounter such work in their studies, they begin to dislike school. When adults (whose mechanical memory is weak) make slow progress, they lose faith in their capacities. They begin to think that they are too old to attend school, that they 'won't learn anyway', that 'it's all right for children whose memory is good, but not for adults who haven't the power to remember', etc. Of course, all this is not so. What they understand, adults can commit to memory better than children. Since their capacity to learn by understanding is

better than that of children, adults should not be made to stuff their minds by mechanical memorizing.

There is another condition that must be observed if effort is to be productive. Even a person with a very good memory can listen to or read a simple statement many times and still not remember it. This is the case when the pupil is indifferent to the subject and has no desire or intention to commit it to memory. For this reason it is very important that instruction should be given in such a way as to induce the pupils to be actively attentive and always aware of what is to be fixed in the memory.

It should be borne in mind that it is very hard to absorb a large amount of material at once, especially when the material is new or strange. Much of what the illiterate person is called upon to learn in school is very new and strange to him. Various language factors, for example (letters, speech sounds, etc.), are entirely unfamiliar to him. He has had no past experience with which to associate them. From this two conclusions may be drawn. In the first place, the various items of the syllabus should be introduced gradually and intelligently. Not more than one sound or letter ought to be studied at a time during the early lessons. The only exception is the first lesson, at which two or three sounds and letters are taken at once so as to begin with a familiar word (mama, Masha, etc.).

In the second place, the teacher should see that the pupils not only learn the material consciously, but also try to link it up with what they have learned at previous lessons. Various aids may be used to make memorization easier, such as spelling charts, letters illustrated with pictures, samples of written text with indications of hand movements, etc. Given such conditions and assistance, which stimulate the pupil's awareness and active participation, adults can get along better in their studies than children.

#### HOW BEGINNERS READ

Experiments have shown that when beginners read, they fix their eyes on the text in a different way from people who read well. When a beginner goes through a line of text his eyes make many stops (pauses, fixations), perhaps as many as 40 or more. It can be assumed that in the early days of learning to read, the pauses are as many as there are letters in the line.

It is noteworthy that the pauses made by poor readers differ from those of good readers; they are less regular and longer. This means that while the eyes of a good reader may pause 3 to 7 times a line, those of the poor reader may pause 10 to 15 times in one line, and 40 to 50 times in another. There may be 5 or 6 pauses in the first half of a line containing simple words, and 25 to 30 in the second half, if the words are harder. The time variation of the pauses made by a good reader, when the text is simple, ranges from two-tenths to four-tenths of a second. But with a poor reader the range of variation is so great that it is practically impossible to determine the amount of time spent on each pause.

Another trait peculiar to those who are learning to read is the so-called *regressive movement* of the eyes, which can be traced by watching the



reader's eyes as he reads. Even a good reader does not always run his eyes along the line in one direction (from left to right). Tests have shown that sometimes the eyes go back in the opposite direction (from right to left). Often the reason for such regressive movements is the difficulty of the text due either to the presence of incomprehensible words, or to bad print (obliterated or wrongly written words). Therefore, when the text is difficult or the printing is bad, regressive movements occur, as a rule, more often.

With poor readers such movements are more frequent and with beginners they reach the maximum. If the instruction has been badly organized the eyes of the reader sometimes shift along the line in a chaotic manner. In such cases the reader's efficiency drops almost to zero.

For the beginner each word is a problem which is not easy to solve. He cannot, of course, recognize a word 'at sight'. Therefore he has to deal with each letter separately and must know its connotation, i.e. which sound is expressed by the given letter, which means that he must be able to distinguish the various sounds in a word. It is only gradually, through constant practice, that he develops the ability to recognize syllables, and then whole words, at sight.

On the strength of these facts repeated efforts were made to devise a method which would help a pupil to read by relying on his knowledge of the different letters. Most widespread was the so-called phonic method. This method assumed that each sound in the language is designated by a particular letter and that therefore all one had to do in order to be able to read was to learn to pronounce each sound 'purely'; and to memorize the corresponding letters. Reproduction of the sounds in the same order as the letters are arranged would thus produce words. The method was used very extensively. Nevertheless, it is fundamentally unsound. The fact is that when we utter a word, each sound follows immediately after another sound. The organs of speech (tongue, throat, vocal cords, etc.) function continuously and come to rest only when the full word is delivered. But when we utter a single sound separately, say the vowel sound *o* or *a*, our organs of speech go through the same three functions as in pronouncing a whole word: they spring from a state of rest into readiness for articulation, participate in the utterance of the sound, and return to a state of rest. The same thing happens with each sound when we pronounce the sounds of a word separately one after the other, as for example the sounds *a - g - o* of the English word *ago*.

No matter how swiftly we articulate separate sounds one after another there will always be superfluous movements of the speech organs hampering correct pronunciation. Therefore the reader should not try to pronounce a word as the sum of its separate sounds. The reading should be done in syllables, or (in the initial stage of learning) by pronouncing whole words in which the sounds are closely interconnected.

Here we come up against an apparent contradiction. We have just said that a beginner cannot recognize syllables, not to mention words, at sight. And now we insist that he should not read by pronouncing separate sounds, and that the smallest unit for pronunciation aloud should be the syllable. What then is he to do if he should not articulate sounds separately but cannot yet recognize whole syllables? The answer

is that there is a difference between the process of pronouncing a word (or syllable) and that of perceiving it. The sounds of a syllable cannot be pronounced separately, but they can be perceived separately. The problem therefore is to understand how to discern the letters separately, and at the same time to pronounce the syllable as a whole.

A person who reads well recognizes syllables and their component letters much more quickly than he can pronounce them. His perception is ahead of his speech. Thus he has no difficulty in pronouncing a syllable as a whole sound even if he runs his eyes over the letters one by one. But what will happen if we show him the letters one after another with small pauses in between (by covering the word with a strip of paper and then slowly moving the strip from left to right)? He will articulate the word with a drawl, lengthening each sound until he sees the next letter (*Dddooooorraaaa*). From the point of view of utterance and sound it will be a whole word, although from the point of view of visual perception it is broken up into perception of each letter separately.

The situation is much the same for a person who is beginning to learn to read. He can pronounce a syllable much quicker than he can grasp all the letters, or even one of them. His apprehension lags behind his articulation, for he needs time to recognize each letter. In other words he is in the same position as the good reader who is shown the letters of a word one by one. The only solution is to read in syllables. This involves the dragging out of the first sound of the syllable until the next letter is recognized (*Dddo-rrra*). Upon recognizing the letter *d*, the illiterate pupil keeps sounding it until he recognizes the letter *o*, and until he does so his organs of speech do not cease to function. Although he reads with a drawl, he reads whole syllables. The qualitative difference between this manner of reading and the others mentioned above, is quite obvious. Although the syllable is pronounced as a whole unit, it is not perceived visually as such, it is not recognized 'at sight'.

This method differs from the phonic method in that even though the syllable is perceived letter by letter and uttered with a drawl, it is read as a whole. There are no superfluous movements of the speech organs, nor any effort to produce separate sounds. From the point of view of utterance and sound, it is a reading of whole syllables. But visually it is a reading of letters, since each letter of the syllable is recognized separately. The significant value of this method is that it enables the beginner to apprehend all the letters of the syllable without interrupting its pronunciation.

#### SKILLS NECESSARY FOR LEARNING TO WRITE

To write down language, one must first know how to divide it into words, because when words are written together they become incomprehensible (for instance: *sheboughtsomebread*). Next, one should be able to divide words into syllables, since writing whole words, like reading whole words, is beyond the beginner's capacity.

But the main thing is to learn to distinguish by ear all the articulate sounds represented by the symbols of the Russian language (Russian

spelling being strictly phonetic, i.e. every simple sound is represented by a distinct symbol or letter). This can be seen from the way a beginner writes. When he writes the word *Masha*, for instance, he first pronounces it and listens closely to the sounds. After determining the sounds in this manner, he starts to write them out in letters.

There is also another way of writing, when symbols stand not for sounds but for whole syllables (syllabaries) or for whole words, in which case there is no need to distinguish separate vocal sounds. But the system of using characters to represent syllables and words is a very difficult one. It means learning an endless number of words and syllables, as in the Chinese language. It is both easier and quicker to learn the sound method of writing, whereby symbols are used to signify a total of about forty sounds. That is why sound-spelling has replaced other forms of writing in practically all culturally advanced countries.

In addition to the skills already mentioned, it is necessary to know the alphabet (letter symbols) by which speech sounds are expressed. Knowledge of the alphabet in turn calls for the development of two further skills: the ability first to distinguish letters visually, and second, to know them by name: *em*, *en* (*m*, *n*), etc. The fact that these are two different accomplishments may be seen from the way an illiterate pupil sometimes looks at the letter *n* and calls it *m*. This shows that he has learnt the names of letters, but does not distinguish clearly between those that are similar.

And finally, the pupil must have it firmly fixed in his mind which sound is represented by which symbol. Suppose a beginner who can distinguish sounds and knows the alphabet is asked to write the word *soda*. In order to do so, he must know which particular letters correspond to the sound *s*, to the sound *o*, and so on. If, for example, he hears that the second sound of the word is *o*, but does not know which letter to apply to that sound, he may write down any letter at random.

It follows from the above that writing (or spelling with the aid of cardboard letters) is essentially an analytical operation—the breaking up of speech into sounds. The impression that writing is a synthetic process, is an illusion. Even the addition to several letters of one more letter (*salv*+*o*=*salvo*) cannot be said to constitute synthesis. Before adding one letter to the others, the pupil must first analyse (separate) the sounds of the word. Thus, analysis is unavoidable. If a pupil merely adds one letter to another without reading the resultant word, then the element of synthesis will be lacking completely. The above-mentioned skills are sufficient for a pupil to be able to form simple words out of cardboard letters of the alphabet. But still another attainment is needed for writing on paper—the ability to trace letters and words with a pencil or pen.

To sum up, in order to be able to write one must have the following skills (not counting, of course, the fundamental ability to express an idea with the proper words): (a) the skill to separate speech into words; (b) the skill to divide words into syllables; (c) the ability to distinguish the sounds that go into the making of a word or syllable; (d) the knowledge of which sound is represented by which letter; (e) the ability to trace letters. All these things a beginner must learn if he is to acquire proficiency in writing.



If we analyse reading and writing skills, we shall find that they have many elements in common. Both in reading and in writing one must know how to break up speech into words and syllables, be able to distinguish speech sounds, and be fully conversant with the alphabet.

The most difficult thing to learn is how to distinguish speech sounds. To a literate person it seems easy and simple to see that there are three sounds in the word *rum*, but for an illiterate person it is something that must be learned from the beginning at the expense of considerable time and effort. And unless a person knows how to divide words into sounds, he will never be able to read properly. In this respect there is a close relationship between the teaching of writing and the teaching of reading. The best way of breaking up speech into sounds is that used by the beginner when he learns to write. For this reason writing is a most useful way of helping the illiterate pupil to get over the difficulty of learning the structure of the language. In the process of writing or spelling words with cardboard letters, the pupil acquires the habit of recognizing whole words and syllables 'at sight'.

#### METHODS OF TEACHING READING AND WRITING

In the work of teaching reading and writing to adults during the Cultural Campaign, professional teachers were assisted by hundreds of thousands of volunteers who regarded their coaching as social work. Very often their manner of teaching followed the old system by which they themselves had at one time been taught, or was quite unsystematic, or was based on the methods used for children. In such cases the process of learning was greatly retarded and was sometimes so slow that the pupils lost patience and left school before the end of the year.

A glance at some of the errors of method most frequently encountered will not only show what should be avoided, but will also give us a clearer understanding of correct methods.

##### *The alphabetic method*

First there is the so-called alphabetic method, which at first glance seems quite simple and understandable. According to this method the pupil learns the letters of the alphabet and then adds letters together to form syllables; *aye* plus *bee* equals *ab*; *bee* plus *aye* equals *ba*, and so forth. This method is now seldom used in its pure form; pupils are taught to read whole words rather than syllables and consonants are all given the same end-sounds: *bee*, *dee*, *fee*, *lee*, *ree*, etc. Thus *rung* is spelt: *ree-u-nee-gee*. It is only natural that the pupil finds it hard to understand why *mee* plus *aye* is pronounced *ma*. Nevertheless he eventually learns to read, because through continued practice with letters and words he learns to distinguish speech sounds and to work out for himself which sound is expressed by each letter. Gradually he gets into the habit of recognizing syllables. However, the habit comes slowly because it is acquired not



consciously, but mechanically. Sometimes it is only toward the end of the year that the pupil begins to learn to read, and even then his reading is unsteady, without sufficient understanding, and inexpressive.

The fallacy of this method lies in the assumption that it is enough to learn the letters of the alphabet by rote in order to be able to read. This, of course, is not the case.

### *The phonic method*

Another method widely used by volunteer teachers was the phonic method, which assumes that the sounds represented by the various letters can be reproduced separately and that therefore the beginner should start by learning isolated sounds. The pupil is given to understand that speech consists of sounds and that these sounds are represented by letters. The teacher tries to get the pupil to pronounce the sounds separately and then to combine the sounds into syllables. The next stage is the reading of words and phrases.

This method appears at first glance to be comprehensible and simple, both for the teacher and the pupil. But what happens is this: instead of reading a word smoothly, the pupil begins to spell it out: *M, ash, a* for *Masha*.

No matter how hard the teacher urges the pupil to read faster and pronounce the word in a single, uninterrupted vocal process, and no matter how hard the pupil himself tries, nothing comes of it. Separate sounds do not make a fluent word. Dividing a word into separate, or 'pure', sounds is nothing more than a kind of abbreviated spelling. Hence, the main shortcoming of the phonic method is that it invariably degenerates into the alphabetic method mentioned above.

The two good things about the phonic method are these: it focuses the attention of the pupil on the sounds of speech and it makes clear to him the process of learning reading. But these advantages are more than offset by the wasted effort involved in trying to make the pupil pronounce all sounds 'purely', and by the discouragement of the pupil in the face of his failure to do so.

### *The whole-word method*

The basic principle of a method devised in America with the object of avoiding the shortcomings of the phonic method, was that of memorizing whole words. This method appealed to American teachers because the English language abounds in simple and short words and because spelling in English differs radically from pronunciation. Since the same letter may be pronounced in different ways in different words, it is very difficult for the reader to rely on letters separately. This method did enable the pupil, by comparing memorized words, to discern the sounds of speech gradually. And so, after imprinting several hundred words in his mind, he learned to read.

As long as the pupils were busy memorizing whole words—which often took a long time—they were spared the trouble of learning sounds and letters. Naturally, the children were unable to write. Writing was



replaced by copying the words of a text, which did not require any sound analysis. Various ways were devised to make the mechanical work of committing whole words to memory easier. Sometimes the lesson was in the nature of a game, for example, but its aim was always the same: to give the pupils as many opportunities as possible to recognize and 'read' a word by seeing it.

The Russian language differs greatly from English in that its spelling is much simpler. For this reason, the pupil learning to read in Russian does not have to memorize whole words. Nevertheless, variations of this method were at one time in vogue in our country and widely used as a means of teaching reading. The whole-word method proved unsuitable for Russian schools, and especially for the tutoring of illiterate adults, for the following reasons: the procedure of instruction is purely mechanical; the method relies chiefly on memory and calls for the learning of many words by heart; the process of teaching reading lasts too long.

The habit of grasping words by their general appearance often leads the pupil into error when he is reading because he makes wrong 'guesses'. This method is incompatible with the need for Russian pupils to learn to write consciously and to understand the phonetic composition of speech (as was mentioned earlier in the section dealing with writing skills).

#### TEACHING READING AND WRITING BY THE ANALYTIC-SYNTHETIC SOUND METHOD

Considering everything that has been said hitherto, the analytic-synthetic sound method has been found to be most expedient for solving the general educational problems involved in the teaching of reading and writing. The method is so named because it contains the basic elements of both analysis and synthesis. Analysis, in the process of learning reading, is the breaking up of sentences into words, of words into syllables and of syllables into sounds; synthesis is the putting together of sounds, designated by letters, into syllables and words.

Analysis and synthesis are, in this context, in constant interaction. Moreover, when analysing a word the reader concentrates particularly on the articulation of sounds. The principle of sound analysis is to develop the habit of separating words into syllables, and into sounds. If the pupil learns to distinguish sounds, to establish the relationship quickly between sounds and letters, and understand the method of building words out of syllables and sounds, he can, through systematic visual exercise (reading of texts), easily learn to read new texts with unfamiliar words.

#### *Introductory talk. Division of speech into words*

The teacher begins the lesson with a talk and explains that the main objective of the pupils is to learn to read and write. Written language consists of words made out of letters. From this the pupils draw the inference that the first thing to learn is to recognize the different words used in speech. After that they will be able to divide speech into words

intelligently. Beginning with a simple two-word phrase, the number of words in the phrase is gradually increased to three and four: *our car*, *our car runs*, *our car runs well*. The teacher gives the first phrase, divides it into words himself, and explains that the words are written separately. After that the teacher gives only the whole phrase and the pupils themselves determine the number of words. Eventually the pupils find their own examples, beginning with phrases of two, three or four words. Next they say a phrase with an exact number of words asked for by the teacher. Probably not all the pupils will be able to do this at the first lesson. However, it is not worth while spending too much time on this exercise. It is at the subsequent lessons that the pupils begin to acquire facility: The only important thing is for the pupils to understand that speech consists of words. The phrases used for analysis (division of speech into words) should under no circumstances be memorized, either auditorily or visually.

### *Division of words into syllables*

After the division of speech into words is understood, the next step is to divide words into syllables. The teacher points out the purpose of this step and explains that it is hard for the beginner to read whole words at once. It is easier to read by breaking up the words into parts. The teacher shows how this is done by dividing a simple word of two syllables (for example: *pa-pa*).

Simple words of not more than two or three syllables are used at the beginning. Since this is harder work for the pupils than dividing speech into words, various methods are used to assist them. For instance, a word can be shared between two pupils: one speaks the first syllable, and the other, the second. To the slower pupils, the teacher may give the first syllable and suggest the second with a leading phrase, for instance: I am reading a *pa*. . . . The pupil adds . . . *per* to complete the word. There are various other methods. The teacher should not expect the pupils to learn syllabification during the first lesson. It may take as many as four, five or six lessons. However, the first lesson should give the pupils a clear understanding of how to divide simple words. As in the case of breaking up speech into words, there is no need to memorize the words divided into syllables.

About one hour should be devoted to the first lesson dealing with the division of speech and the division of words.

### *Learning the phonetic composition of words*

In passing to the next stage, the breaking up of words into sounds, the teacher explains that different sounds can be distinguished in words and syllables.

To learn to read and write, the pupil must know that each sound is expressed by a particular symbol (letter). He must therefore be able to hear and distinguish the different sounds of which words are composed and know by what letter each sound is designated. The teacher explains that speech consists of very many words and for that reason it is extremely

difficult to write each word in a different manner (such as representing each word by a picture). But with the use of sound symbols writing is easy, because there are only 33 letters to know in order to designate all the sounds, of which there are approximately forty. The teacher further explains that the way to learn to distinguish separate sounds is by catching them with the ear when a word is pronounced slowly. It is also helpful to watch the movements of the speaker's mouth, because with each new sound the mouth takes a different shape. The teacher then distinctly articulates a chosen word, such as *ma-ma*, by syllables. The pupils are asked to determine the number of syllables in this word. Next, the pupils are asked to pronounce the word slowly themselves, listen carefully, and determine how many sounds there are in the first syllable of the word and then in the second. Quite often the pupils are unable to do this by themselves. If so, the teacher helps them by pronouncing the word very slowly and stressing the sound that seems to escape their attention.

It should be borne in mind that the pupils must participate consciously and actively. What sometimes happens in a big class is that the pupils chant the pronunciation of a word without understanding what the exercise is about. It is only when the beginner fully understands the purpose of the exercise and centres all his attention on the analysis of the word, that he really learns to catch all the sounds entering into the composition of the word.

Independent sound analysis must be treated seriously by the pupils because it also serves another essential purpose. The sound of so-called plosive consonants (*p*, *b*, etc.) is hard to catch by ear. The sound *p* cannot be protracted. Its utterance is instantaneous and for that reason is not always audible to the illiterate person. In such cases sound analysis by observation of mouth movements is just as important as analysis by ear. The tense condition assumed by speech organs (lips, tongue, throat) in producing consonant sounds, makes it easy for the observer to identify the different consonants as they are pronounced, and this, in turn, helps him to distinguish the sounds by ear.

The beginner has no perception of a whole syllable and even discerns letters much more slowly than does a good reader. The beginner has thus to protract the reading of the first letter until he recognizes the second letter (*mma-ma*). Analytical pronunciation (*mma-ma*) has obviously much in common with this type of reading. In both cases the movements of the speech organs are the same. Analysis by ear and by observing the movements of the speech organs therefore not only helps the beginner to distinguish the different sounds of speech, but also trains him in developing the right manner of reading.

It is clear then that unless the pupil learns the phonetic composition of words properly, he will make no progress in reading, spelling or, writing. Besides understanding that a word is made up of different sounds, he must become proficient in distinguishing all the sounds of the word he reads. For this reason sufficient time must be given to exercises in analysing words by ear and by observing mouth movements. These exercises are facilitated by a right choice of words, as we shall see below.



### *Singling out sounds and memorizing their symbols*

When pupils become familiar with the phonetic composition of a word, the next important thing to do is to correlate the isolated sounds and the letters to which they correspond. The teacher puts up a word on the board, made up of separate cardboard letters. He tells the pupils that they will now have to trace each sound to its respective symbol. First the pupils divide the word into syllables. The teacher separates the parts of the word accordingly and moves the first syllable away from the second. Next, the pupils determine the name of the last letter of the first syllable (*ma-a*). The teacher detaches the letter *a* and draws the pupils' attention to it. The pupils then single out the sound *m*, and the teacher points to the letter *m*. The second syllable *ma* is analysed in the same manner.

Observation of the position of the mouth of the speaker is a very useful aid to the analysis and identification of sounds. In articulating such letters as *m*, *s*, *a*, *r* and *sh*, the mouth assumes a characteristic and easily recognizable form, to which the attention of the pupils may be drawn. However, this method should not be used to excess: a detailed description of the shape of the mouth, etc., is not necessary, nor is there any point in using the method for all words.

When the pupils have gone through the above exercise, the teacher puts the whole word together again. Together with the teacher, the pupils read it both syllabically and as a whole, slowly, protracting the pronunciation. The teacher explains that the word should be pronounced in whole syllables. After that, the word is read again, in syllables, in unison with the teacher, and then by separate pupils.

The results of this work are fixed in the memory by appropriate exercises. The first exercise is designed to consolidate the pupils' ability to distinguish familiar sounds in a word. The teacher asks the pupils to name words beginning with one of the sounds, say, *m* or *a*, that have been studied in the earlier part of the lesson (*magic*, *mend*, *Masha*, *art*, *Anna*, etc.). Next, the pupils are asked to find familiar letters in their primer, as a way of further impressing these letters on their minds. During this work with letters, the pupils are reminded that for reading, a knowledge of letters alone is insufficient. They can recognize letters and know them by name, and still not be able to read.

In most groups of illiterates there were some who knew the letters of the alphabet by name and pronounced them in their own way (usually: *mee*, *vee*, *nee*, *ree*, etc.). It was not advisable to re-teach them in the initial stage of instruction, and so the teacher had to use the names to which they were accustomed, leaving the matter of teaching the right pronunciation (*em*, *ar*, etc.) to the post-primer period.

### *Putting letters together to form words*

Once they have acquired the skills necessary for writing, the ability to distinguish the sounds of a word and knowledge of the letters by which those sounds are designated, pupils still find the actual process of writing (with a pencil, pen or chalk) quite difficult. They write very slowly,

tracing each letter with great effort, with the result that they find it hard to think at the same time of what they should be writing. In order to free them from this preoccupation, writing is replaced by forming words with cardboard letters. But even this is difficult. The teacher must help the pupils at first by showing them how to do it. Words should be put together by syllables. First of all, the pupils divide a given word into syllables and then, under the teacher's guidance, determine which sounds enter into the first syllable. When that is done, they choose the letters to form the first syllable. The next syllable is handled in the same manner. The whole word is thus constructed in its syllabic divisions.

There is much significance in this method of building words from cardboard letters. This task forces the pupils to first of all submit the word to a sound analysis, which, as we have seen, is one of the most important steps in learning to read. We have also mentioned the difficulties of this step. Word-building with cardboard letters gives the pupil the opportunity to do the task consciously, with understanding. He is aware of the purpose of breaking up a whole word into parts, and of the reason why he should hear each sound of the word. Moreover, throughout the process of such auditory analysis, the corresponding letters are before the pupil's eyes, and that makes it easier for him to fix them in his memory. Composing words with ready-made letters also puts the pupil in frequent contact with whole words and syllables, and thus they gradually fix themselves in his mind as whole characters. Memorization thus does not involve any form of rote or special effort. However, the cardboard-letter method should be used wisely, for it is only a substitute for writing with pencil or pen in so far as it enables the pupil to concentrate on one specific task at a time.

The cardboard letters should be kept, in order, in a long box, or in a sort of bag with compartments so that the pupils can find them quickly and easily. If, for any reason, such boxes or bags cannot be made, the pupils should have the letters arranged before them in definite order in the middle of the desk, before the lesson begins. It is essential that the pupils should work at word-building on their own. Sometimes a less advanced pupil for whom these exercises are most necessary, 'cribs' from another pupil who is more skilled. His copying can be so mechanical at times that he may place his letters in the same order as he sees them on the desk of the pupil sitting opposite. As a result, he spells the word *rum* as *mur*. Of course, such copying is of no use and can do more harm than good. Even when the less advanced pupil copies correctly from his neighbour, the benefit to him is negligible as he is omitting the most valuable exercise of sound analysis. To encourage maximum independence of the pupils when practising with cardboard letters, assignments should be given according to pupils' ability; the weaker pupils should have less words to compose, and the stronger, more. As in all other exercises, the weaker (less capable) pupils should be given more attention, guidance and help, but without prompting. Their self-dependence should not be undermined; on the contrary, they should be stimulated, encouraged and put on the right track.

### *Passing to the next word*

After the pupils have read the word made up of cardboard letters, the teacher shows them, letter by letter, how the whole word is written (in big letters on the blackboard). The pupils again read the word on the blackboard and then copy it into their exercise book. Without going into the matter in detail at this stage, the teacher briefly explains the proper way of holding the book and pen. The copied word is read again. If it happens to appear on the first pages of the primer, it is read from there too. The word is then considered to be known. If time permits, the class passes on to the next word, consisting of the same sounds. The procedure is the same; divide the word into syllables and the syllables into sounds; compose the word out of cardboard letters, read it, write it down, etc. If the pupils have difficulty in writing certain whole letters, the teacher shows them how to write separate parts of these letters. When they have mastered the strokes, they proceed to write the whole letters, and can then go on to write words.

### *Further reading of words*

The work outlined so far has included some reading, but not enough of it. The pupils should be given more practice in reading. This can be done by re-reading all the words learned already in the primer. As it is not always possible to find a whole word made out of familiar letters only, the teacher can write the first syllable of a word on the blackboard and ask the pupils to read it, telling them that he will then add the second part of the word. For instance, if the pupils have learnt only two sounds: *s* and *i*, the teacher writes the syllable *si* on the blackboard, asks the pupil to read it, and then adds the syllable *lo* (silo). After these exercises, the work done can be recapitulated and the lesson ended.

### *How to conduct the first lesson*

1. Introductory talk to explain how the pupils are going to learn reading and writing. 2. Breaking up of speech into words. 3. Division of words into syllables. 4. Sound analysis and singling out of sounds. 5. Word-building with cardboard letters. 6. Reading of the words. 7. Writing. 8. Work with other words. 9. Reading. 10. Recapitulation.

### *Main elements of subsequent lessons. Sound analysis and singling out of sounds*

The order of steps as outlined for the first lesson is followed in subsequent lessons. Only the talk on the importance of reading and writing and how it ought to be learned is discarded. Certain remarks on the subject—for instance, about the need for syllabification, the separating of syllables into sounds, etc.—are made by the teacher during later lessons only as the occasion demands. The pupils begin to divide speech into words themselves quite easily, except in difficult cases (such as words with prepositions: *on the table*, *at home*, etc.). Division into syllables does not come so easily, but still it does not take up as much time as in the first



lesson and is done by the pupils independently. Less time is given to the division of speech into words and of words into syllables, and more and more time is given to exercises with cardboard letters and to writing and reading.

The words introduced in the second and each of the following lessons include one new sound in addition to those previously worked upon. The words are taken from phrases and studied in the same manner as in the first lesson, one by one. If there is time after the words are learnt, additional words, consisting of sounds that have already been mastered, are analysed. Not more than two new sounds should be introduced at each lesson. For the first two or three lessons, all the words chosen should be simple, comprehensible and short.

There is no point in going ahead if the pupils have not learnt the content of the preceding lessons. In such cases more words should be chosen consisting of those sounds and letters which the pupils have already learnt, and the learning of new sounds can be postponed for one or two lessons. Too hasty an approach may mean that the pupils have not enough time to understand the uniqueness of new sounds and therefore fail to grasp the meaning of the corresponding letters. The more material there is to learn at one time, the harder it is to comprehend and therefore to memorize.

In general, every sound, once it has been identified, should be studied in the greatest possible number of combinations by reading words in which the corresponding letter appears in various combinations with others.

### *Study of more difficult words*

Self-dependence increases as more letters of the alphabet are learnt.

By the time the pupil knows most of the alphabet (i.e. when he approaches the end of the 'primer period'), the process of study itself is modified. Every new sound and letter is learned with greater ease. At the same time writing skills continue to develop and the cardboard alphabet gives way more and more to writing. Less time is devoted to auditory analysis. The pupil refers more and more often to the text of the primer.

At first it is important to have the text of a reading exercise broken down to sounds and constructed with cardboard letters. The transition to the reading of unfamiliar text is advisable only when the pupil's reading skills are well developed; and even then, only those words in which all the sounds and letters are quite familiar should be given to the pupil to read. The teacher should broaden the range of the pupil's self-dependence gradually. Transition from the reading of words put together with cardboard letters to the independent reading of text should not be sudden. When the teacher thinks certain words will be hard for the pupils to read, he should always read those words to them beforehand.

When pupils find it hard to read even simple words, it is natural that more difficult words will require still greater effort. Words which a pupil cannot read are an obstacle to his progress. He may try in vain to read such a word as *strive*, because he cannot grasp the combination of the first consonants and blend the sounds into a whole word. He therefore

spells out the letters, even though he knows that this will not produce the desired result. If this happens frequently, the pupil loses faith in his own abilities, and begins to spell out the letters before trying to read the whole word and thus forms the habit of letter-by-letter reading. To avoid this, the teacher should see to it that the reading material is always within the grasp of the pupil's understanding and should only pass on to harder material gradually.

### *Order of study of syllables*

For the beginner, the degree of difficulty in reading a word depends largely on the nature of its syllables. For example, the words *strata* and *silo* both have two syllables, but the former is much harder to read than the latter. The reason is that the syllable *stra-* is very involved because it has three consonants in a row.

From the experience of the schools concerned with the eradication of illiteracy, it may be said that from the point of view of difficulty syllables can be classified as follows: (a) reverse syllables: *at*, *ul*, etc., composed of two letters; (b) straight syllables: *ma*, *so*, etc., composed of two letters; (c) closed syllables: *com*, *bas*, etc., composed of three letters; (d) syllables with two consonants together: *ste*, *bra*; (e) syllables with three consonants together: *stra*, *spro*.

It goes without saying that syllables with soft-sounding combinations are more difficult to master than those with hard-sounding combinations. The difficult syllables should be taken up only after the easier ones have been grasped. In other words, the pupil should first learn to read easy syllables fluently before tackling the more difficult ones. A habit that is helpful in mastering difficult syllables is that of separate syllable reading, especially during the first half of the school year. None of these exercises should degenerate into mere memorizing by rote. Whole words should be used and plenty of demonstration and explanation given by the teacher.

### *Reading the primer*

As we have already mentioned, the reading of the primer, from the first lesson on, is of increasing importance as the pupil advances. It stands to reason that the use of the primer is not the same at all stages of instruction.

*First stage.* During the first stage (covering the first 15 to 20 lessons of the primer period, when the pupils begin to understand the procedure of reading) the material in the book is read only after the pupils have learned the text beforehand with the aid of cardboard letters.

The text is read aloud by the whole class together, with the teacher, syllable by syllable, clearly articulated and without haste. Different pupils have different aptitudes for reading and understanding the material. Sometimes the difference is very noticeable; the best pupils are two or three times as fast as the least advanced ones. Quantitative distinction is often coupled with qualitative distinction; some pupils grasp a syllable as a whole, while others approach it analytically and therefore are much

slower in their reading. With that in mind, the teacher watches the group closely and does not allow the weaker pupils to lag behind when the whole class reads together. He adjusts the rate of the reading to that of the weaker group. The teacher is aware that weaker pupils quite often repeat the text mechanically, without even reading it; their eyes scan the text above or below the proper line. Obviously then, the teacher can obtain good results in group reading only when he knows the individual traits of each of the pupils.

It should not be thought that there is no individual reading at all during the first stage of schooling. There is. Each pupil is required to read the words and phrases which he or the teacher forms with cardboard letters, small fragments of text in the primer, and the teacher's writing on the blackboard. It is during individual reading that the teacher takes note of the individual traits of each pupil, of his progress and his shortcomings.

*Second stage.* During the second stage, ranging from about the fifteenth to the fortieth lesson and lasting till the end of the primer period, the pupils read faster and are able to cope with longer and more difficult texts. The corresponding texts in the primer are therefore longer. At this stage only difficult words and works that include new syllabic combinations need to be built up with cardboard letters.

When the time comes for reading a story in class, the teacher first gives a four or five minute talk to the pupils to stimulate their interest and to help them to understand what they are about to read. The most difficult (or unfamiliar) words are picked out of the text and explained with the aid of illustrations, photographs, examples, and so forth. After these preliminaries, the teacher reads the story or articles slowly, coherently and expressively. He reads slowly enough for the pupils to follow the text in their primers. After the whole story is read by the teacher, it is read a second time by the pupils. They take turns in reading different passages aloud. When one reads, the others follow the story in the primer.

Every mistake is corrected at once. The mistakes made are of different kinds each of which calls for a specific approach. If the pupil wrongly pronounces the end of a word, which he guesses rather than reads, he is asked to read the word again more attentively so that he will correct himself. If he makes a mistake because of a confusing combination of sounds, or because he encounters a long word, he must be helped to break up the word into syllables. Such work should be done by the teacher only if it is useful for the whole class. But if the word in question presents difficulty only for one or two pupils, an advanced pupil is asked to correct the mistake. The rule, as we have said, is that such words must be read by the whole class before the reading exercises begin. Another mistake made by some pupils is wrong pronunciation of a word because of colloquial speech habits. In all such cases the teacher corrects the pronunciation. After the lesson, the word is analysed in terms of sounds and written out. After each pupil has had his turn the teacher checks to see whether the pupils have understood the meaning of the text. This is done by asking questions about the story. The questions are prepared by the teacher in advance.



Thus we see that, during the second stage, group reading recedes into the background, and is used only in difficult cases when the teacher has little confidence in the pupils' proficiency. This process is gradual and, accordingly, the respective importance of reading in unison and reading in turn keeps changing. Towards the end of the primer period, group reading eventually disappears. The stories used for individual reading by each of the pupils in turn during the second stage are usually read through several times. When this reading method is introduced at the beginning of the second stage (or at the end of the first), it is as well to have the whole class read the story together, the first time, and then to repeat it by having the pupils take turns in reading separate passages. It is essential to vary the manner of reading so that it does not become a monotonous repetition of the same material. For this purpose the pupils are given speech-training exercises, such as observance of punctuation marks, answering questions, etc. Towards the end of the second stage, each text should be read no less than three times. The teacher, aware of the pupils' individual abilities, should give the hardest parts to read to the most advanced pupils. This is most essential at the first reading.

*Third stage.* What distinguishes the third stage (the post-primer period) from the others is that it gradually introduces the practice of 'silent' reading, and of reading following specific instructions.

The pupils can be asked: (a) To read with the purpose of re-telling the story in their own words, or of answering questions ('Read it, and then tell us what you read', or 'Later I'll ask you what the story is about'). Reference has already been made to this form of reading. (b) To read with the purpose of answering certain questions. In this case the teacher announces the questions beforehand, and the pupil must find the answers in the contents of the story. (c) To read and analyse the text in terms of its formal elements (for instance: 'As you read, write out all the words ending with a soft sound').

### *The particular features of the analytic-synthetic method*

One of the distinguishing features of this method is that it makes the process of education understandable to the illiterate pupil and puts stress on independent work. Thus it frees the pupil from the mechanical effort of learning by rote, eliminates the inculcation of habits that he does not understand, and does away with meaningless instruction material. Another feature is that it closely links writing with reading, by recognizing the importance of auditory and visual analysis, which is the basis of the analytic-synthetic method. A third distinguishing feature is that it makes special allowance for the gradual development of reading and writing skills. This results in a change in the way reading and writing are learned, which calls for new methods of teaching.

# Textbooks and study aids for illiterates and semi-literates<sup>1</sup>

During the first years of the campaign against illiteracy, there were no primers or other textbooks suitable for teaching adults. Except for books published before the Revolution, for teaching children, there were only a few primers and these did not meet the requirements for adults either from the point of view of content or from that of method of presentation. They were also unappealing in appearance: the illustrations were not clear, and in many cases badly conceived. The readers and arithmetic books were of the same quality.

For that reason, the People's Commissariat of Education of the Russian Federation organized a competition in the early part of 1919, for the best primers and arithmetic books for illiterates and semi-literates. The subject matter in the books was to be chosen to correspond to the psychology and experience of the adult pupil, and the study material presented in logical sequence of progressively increasing difficulty. Soon primers designed for people of different occupations were published in large editions: primers for workers, peasants, railwaymen, soldiers, etc.

Attempts were also made to compile study aids for teaching the 'three R's' without primers and arithmetic books. The newspaper *Byednota* had a special column headed 'For Illiterates'. The idea was to use the newspaper to help the adults learn their letters. There were 12 lessons, each on a separate subject: Lesson 1 'Our Ignorance'; Lesson 2 'Science drives away Ignorance'; Lesson 3 'We and They'; Lesson 4 'Our Struggle'; Lesson 5 'Two Dawns', etc. The lessons in the newspaper were based on the analytic-synthetic method. The advantage of these lessons was that the texts were connected and gave the pupils information while they were developing their reading skills. The disadvantages were that too many letters were given in the early lessons, and the directions for the pupils were not clear. They contained very little about the rules for writing, and gave nothing at all on arithmetic.

The Moscow Regional Department of Public Education put out an interesting study aid. It was a leaflet published as a supplement to the newspaper *Byednota* and entitled *Down with Illiteracy*. It included the fundamentals of arithmetic. This leaflet helped stimulate the pupil's interest and broadened his political knowledge.

Beginning with 1920, a magazine called *Down with Illiteracy* was published twice a month. It presented material designed for people

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1. By A. M. Ivanova.

who had progressed through the primer stage. The texts included literacy extracts and touched upon a variety of subjects, such as geography, agricultural questions, etc. The magazine also published advice to people on education, and information on methods used by teachers who had experience in working with illiterate adults. It contained many illustrations, and at the back was a vocabulary of the difficult words used in the issue.

Several years later, *The Peasant Newspaper for New Readers* was published as a study aid for pupils who had passed the primer stage. It came out six times a month. The subject matter in this newspaper was designed for country people and was of interest to adult collective farmers. For example, the paper's fifty-fourth issue for 1934, published on the eve of the eighteenth anniversary of the Revolution of 1917, carried on its first page such items as these: 'What are your Collective Farm's Accomplishments on this Anniversary of the Revolution?' and 'On the Eve of the Great Holiday'. On page 2, there was an article headed 'Order and Culture in our Communal Affairs'. On page 3, under the heading 'Learn to Count', there was one of a series of arithmetic lessons. And finally, on page 4, there were items of interest to farmers: 'How to store and preserve Seed', 'Autumn is the time to see to your Seed Stores', 'Store up Seed of Fodder Grasses'. Reading such items broadened the pupils' knowledge of farming and encouraged them to study.

Issue No. 67 (1935) carried current political news on its first and second pages, and on page 3 there was another arithmetic lesson on multiplying whole numbers by decimals. The items on farming on the last page included: 'Efficient Use of Fertilizers', and 'We started with Fertilizers'. The latter was an article by an outstanding woman collective farmer, M. Demchenko, who was well known throughout the country. It described how she succeeded in obtaining a record yield of sugar-beet per acre. Among the other items on the page were: 'What to do with Fertilizers in Autumn and Winter', 'How best to use Fertilizers', 'How to make Compost', 'How to use Peat', 'Don't forget Ashes and Lime'. There was also a bibliography on these subjects.

In other issues, there were items on the working methods of outstanding collective farmers who obtained high yields of grain, vegetables and other crops, or who had developed highly productive breeds of cattle.

The lessons in *The Peasant Newspaper for New Readers* were so presented that the pupil could study them without a teacher. They were printed in large type, and the definitions and other items of importance which the pupils were to learn by heart were printed in heavy type. Following the text there were questions to test whether the pupil had learnt the lesson. Two or three problems in arithmetic (with examples) were set and pupils were invited to send their answers to the newspaper for checking.

Many of the articles in *The Peasant Newspaper for New Readers* were illustrated. Photographs printed included those of the outstanding collective farmers whose working methods had been described in the issue.

Pamphlets were also published under such titles as *How to learn to write without a Teacher*, *How to learn to count by Oneself*, *The Peasant Scholar*, *Learn by Yourself*.

These study aids played a significant part in the education of adults.



They were popular because they offered readers a means of educating themselves without going to school and because they gave useful information on questions of interest to such readers. Nevertheless, primers, readers, grammars and arithmetic books remained the chief means of teaching adults. Their quality steadily improved. The readers contained texts which were longer and more complex than those in the primers. The first reader designed for schools for adults<sup>1</sup> compiled by I. R. Palei and G. Entina, contained texts such as the following:

#### THE VILLAGE OF SHUSHENSKOYE

In Krasnoyar Territory, in the north of our country there is a village called Shushenskoye. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya were in exile in that village, in Tsarist times. The peasants led a hard life. Hardly any of them were literate. All around was dust and dirt, but no vegetation.

Nowadays you would never recognize Shushenskoye. Its streets are clean. The houses are bright. It has a post-office and a telephone station, an infirmary, a chemist's shop, a kindergarten, a library, four other shops, a savings bank, a restaurant and a cinema. In the central square stands a statue of V. I. Lenin.

The villagers are members of two collective farms: the Lenin Farm and the Krupskaya Farm. Every collective farmer has an abundance of grain and other produce. Each has a cow and some small farm animals. All the villagers in Shushenskoye have learnt to read and write. The collective farmers subscribe to many newspapers and magazines.

On one of the streets of Shushenskoye there is a little house where Lenin lived from 1897 to 1899. Now that house is a museum. Thousands of people visit it.

Following this text was the definition of the word 'restaurant', which was new to the pupils. Then came questions the pupils were to answer:

1. When and why did V. I. Lenin and N. K. Krupskaya live in Shushenskoye?
2. What was Shushenskoye like in those days and what kind of life did the people there lead?
3. Describe what Shushenskoye is like now.

#### OIL<sup>2</sup>

A motor-car speeds along the road. From the fields of the collective farm comes the roar of tractors and combine-harvesters. An aeroplane flies high in the sky. The engines in all these machines run on petrol. And petrol is extracted from oil. Oil yields kerosene, and also mazut, which is a good fuel for locomotives, steamships, factories and plants. Vaseline is produced from oil. Have you ever seen paraffin? It is what candles are made of. Paraffin is also obtained from oil.

Do you use naphthalene? It protects clothing from moths. Naphthalene, too, is made from oil.

Oil is found in the depths of the earth. It is a greasy liquid. Our country has the

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1. Schools for illiterates and semi-literates were often referred to as 'schools for adults'.  
2. A map showing the oilfields in the Soviet Union accompanied this text.

biggest oil resources in the world. Most of our oil is obtained in the Caucasus near the city of Baku. Not long ago, oil was discovered near the city of Sizran. Much oil will be produced there, too. There is also a lot of oil on the island of Sakhalin. There is a lot of it in other parts of our country, too.

Questions:

1. What is made from oil?
2. Where is oil produced in our country?

#### HARNESSED RIVER<sup>1</sup>

We have built a huge hydroelectric station on the Dnieper river. This broad, deep river has been blocked by a dam. The dam is almost a kilometre long, and is as high as a tall building. The water of the Dnieper turns the wheels of turbines. The turbines drive machines which produce electricity. Electricity is used in the making of pig-iron and steel, and to make trains and machines go. It can be used for ploughing. It lights towns and villages. Electricity is something we cannot do without. In our country it serves the people.

Here is a poem by S. Marshak, about the hydroelectric station on the Dnieper:

To the Dnieper, broad and free,  
Man said, 'I'll make you work for me:  
I'll harness  
                  you  
                          with a concrete wall.  
And your waters                   hemmed in  
  tight,  
Will drive  
                  turbines  
                          as they fall.  
And make current  
                          day  
                                  and night,  
To run  
                  the plants  
                          on every hand,  
To light  
                  the streets  
                          along the way,  
To drive  
                  the ploughs  
                          through fertile land,  
And make  
                  our houses  
                          bright as day.'

Questions:

1. What is electricity used for?
2. What do the words 'Harness you with a concrete wall' mean? What is meant by 'wall' here?
3. How does water make electricity?

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1. Above the text there was a drawing of the Dnieper Hydroelectric Station.

The time has passed when the sickle and the scythe were the only tools for harvesting grain. Now there are machines which take the place of hundreds of sickles and scythes. Today's reaper operates a combine-harvester. He wears blue overalls and dark glasses, and his hands are brown with grease. He stands on his machine high above the ground. There is a whistle in his hand. He uses the whistle to give directions to the driver at the wheel.

The combine moves across the field. At one side of it, a kind of long roller bends the grain towards the cutting blades, which move back and forth very fast as they cut off the ears. When cut, the ears are drawn into the machine. There, inside, the grain is threshed out of the ears and winnowed, and forced through a pipe into a bin on top of the machine.

The combine-harvester does three things at once: it reaps, threshes and winnows. As it moves across the field it cuts a swath five metres wide. Some of our wheat fields extend for dozens of kilometres in all directions. Thousands of people would be needed to harvest all that wheat: to reap and bind it, thresh it with flails and winnow it with shovels. But with combine-harvesters, it takes only a few people to do the job. Each person operating a combine does the work of a hundred people working by hand. And the work is of course much easier.

Questions:

1. What are combine-harvesters used for? What three things do they do?
2. Why can't combine-harvesters and tractors be used on small, individual farms?

The second reader for adult schools contained longer and more difficult texts than the first. The same principle was followed in choosing the texts—that is, the subject matter was selected to interest adults.

The following are samples of texts given in the second reader:

#### CREATING NEW VARIETIES OF PLANTS<sup>2</sup>

##### *Fire of the fields*

There is a weed called couch-grass. In Latin, it is called *Agropyron*. That means 'fire of the fields'. The weed is so named because it is practically impossible to get rid of it. Farmers have cursed this weed for thousands of years. Whenever it attacked a field it won the battle against man. In the old days when couch-grass invaded the fields, people left their homes and settled on new land where there was no couch-grass.

People have tried hard to get rid of couch-grass. And there is still much work to be done in order to clear it out of our fields once and for all. However, couch-grass has some remarkable qualities. It grows anywhere under any conditions. There is no country in the world where it does not grow. It grows on the hot steppe and in the shady cool of the forest. It grows in wet places alongside of sedge, on alkali land, and on the rocky sides of mountains. Couch-grass grows where nothing else will grow. It stands scorching heat and bitter cold equally well. And it spreads very quickly. One plant produces as many as 10,000 seeds. Its enormous root system produces hundreds of shoots which grow into new plants. And finally, a seed of couch-grass, once it takes root in the soil, lives for dozens of years, producing thousands more seeds and shoots every year.

1. This text was illustrated with a picture showing combine-harvesters at work.  
2. By Academician N. Tsitsin.



Imagine for a moment what would happen if wheat, instead of couch-grass, had all these qualities. What a revolution it would cause in our economy—in our whole life! Now our grain growers have to do the same thing all over again every year. In spring they sow, in summer and autumn they harvest, and in winter they get ready for the spring sowing.

What if we had perennial wheat? It could be sown once, and would yield several years in a row. After all, we do get three cuttings a year from lucerne. Just think what advantages would be gained from perennial wheat. In the first place, it would mean much less work for people and machines. The soil would not have to be tilled every year. In the second place, it would mean a saving of seed grain. It takes one centner of seed to sow a hectare of wheat. Just think how many more centners of wheat would be left in the collective farm granaries all over the Soviet Union.

And that is not all. With perennial wheat we could get more than one crop a year. New shoots would grow up and ripen after the first crop was harvested. In the south, there would be time for two crops to ripen. And in the north where a second crop would not have time to ripen, the new growth could be used for hay. That would be profitable, too.

And that is still not all. A wheat as hardy as couch-grass would grow on any soil; it would not be attacked by rust or smut, and it could stand both drought and rain. Wheat like that would grow anywhere. We could get good crops of golden wheat on all our marshlands, on alkali lands, and on wastelands where nothing but weeds grow now.

To produce wheat like that is a daring thing to dream of!

#### *The realization of a dream*

But is this only a dream? Is it not possible really to produce a new variety of wheat which would be just as hardy as couch-grass? After all, Michurin crossed the apple with the pear, and the bird-cherry with the cultivated cherry, and gave our country new and valuable varieties of fruit.

Soviet science says this is possible. Such a type of wheat can be bred. Moreover, it has already been done. It is called the 'wheat-couch-grass hybrid'. A hybrid is a cross of two species of animals or plants.

Thus the wheat-couch-grass hybrid is a cross between wheat and couch-grass. It appears that in spite of the great difference between them, couch-grass and wheat are related. They both belong to the same family.

Questions:

1. In what way is couch-grass harmful.
2. Describe its good qualities.
3. What could be done if wheat had these qualities?
4. In what ways would that be profitable? How was perennial wheat developed?

A discussion on these questions between the teacher and the pupils helped the latter to learn to express themselves, to learn how to find answers to questions in books, to speak logically, and to enrich their vocabulary.

Besides readers, the textbooks for adult schools included elementary grammar books which made it possible to give the pupils systematic lessons in the fundamentals of grammar and spelling and to develop their powers of expression. Most of these books were devoted to grammar and spelling. They contained a variety of exercises suited to the visual, manual-motor and auditory memory, and particularly to the reasoning capacity of adults. They were designed for both oral work in class and for home-



*1920's. Women of the Soviet East study.*



*A young peasant helps a 75-year-old man to read a newspaper for semi-literates.*

work. The explanations of rules and the exercises given for practice in applying these rules were based for the most part on connected texts on subjects of interest to adult pupils.

The grammar and spelling manual for semi-literates written by I. R. Palei and published in 1939 contained, in addition to a section on grammar and spelling proper, a second section on business correspondence which taught pupils the correct ways of writing addresses, receipts, letters of attorney, applications, and the minutes of a meeting; how to draw up an outline of a report to be made at a meeting, how to write an item for a newspaper, how to summarize newspaper articles for study, etc.

The book explained the purposes of different kinds of document, the form in which they are written, and stated by whom the signature must be witnessed. Examples of each type of document were given.

The book dealt with the subject of 'Receipts and Letters of Attorney' as follows:

A receipt is given when a person receives money or some article of value. The receipt must show the amount of money received, in figures and in writing. It must be signed by the person receiving the money, and the exact date of writing must be given.

Example:

#### Receipt

This is to certify that I have received 45 (forty-five) roubles from the Managing Board of the Mayak Collective Farm, to buy books and copy-books for the school for adults.

2 January 1935.

Pyotr Zhukov.

A letter of attorney is given to a person who is authorized to receive money or some article of value for someone else. The amount of money, or the description of the article to be received must be written in the letter of attorney, as well as the name of the person to receive it. The signature on the letter of attorney must be certified by the factory trade union committee or the rural Soviet, or by some other organization.

Example:

#### Letter of Attorney

I authorize G. N. Semyonov to receive my pay for the second half of July 1935 from the Compressor Factory.

30 June 1935.

V. Tarassov.

This was followed by exercises:

301. Write a receipt in your name for money received from a factory or collective farm.
302. Write a letter of attorney in your name for a friend to receive money for you.



Such assignments were done by the pupils with interest and pleasure, since they dealt with documents of everyday utility. The grammar book concluded with advice to pupils finishing the school for adults on how to keep in practice with their reading and writing:

1. *Read and write as often and as much as you can.* Writing, like all other work, requires practice. If you rarely take up your pen or pencil, you will soon forget how to write. Reading will help you to learn and remember how words are spelt.
2. *Write as much as you can at work and at home.* Copy the most interesting and important things you read in books and you will understand and remember them better. Write down your thoughts and observations in a special copy-book so as not to forget them. In the evening, write down the things you must do the next day in your memorandum book. At meetings, write down what you want to ask the speaker, and what you want to say during the discussion. Write items for the newspaper, and letters to your friends. Write down the work you have done.
3. *When you begin to write, think about what you are writing and how best to say it.* Decide just what you want to say and how to say it best. Be careful to spell the difficult words correctly.
4. *Never guess at the spelling of a word.* If you don't know exactly, try to recall the rule, or look up the word in the dictionary.
5. *From time to time give what you have written to a better-educated friend to correct.* Write out all the words you have mis-spelt several times and try to remember them.
6. *Have a special copy-book for spelling.* Enter in this book all the words which you find difficult to spell, in alphabetical order.
7. *Try to write without having to make corrections—neatly and with no erasures or blots,* so that your writing can be read easily. Keep your notes in good order. Learn to write in an even, straight line and to shape your letters correctly.
8. *When you copy something, look at it well before you write, so that you can put down whole words or even sentences at once. Don't write letter by letter or syllable by syllable.* Then it will be easier for you to remember how words are spelt.
9. *Remember. If your writing is bad, and you make mistakes in spelling, it will be hard to read.* Always try to follow the rules of writing.
10. *Always write correctly even if you are writing for yourself.* If you write and spell badly when you are writing for yourself you will get into bad habits and forget how to write correctly.

This advice was a big help to those finishing the schools for adults. It prevented them from falling back into illiteracy.

In addition to primers, readers and grammar books, arithmetic books and geography books were also published for the schools for adults. The geography books contained short texts on subjects covered in the programme, followed by questions designed to help the pupils learn the most important points and to re-tell them coherently. They were well illustrated with photographs and drawings showing different types of landscape, and views of the big cities in the U.S.S.R. and other countries. There were also many maps to illustrate the text. Large coloured maps were supplied as supplements.

# Guidance on teaching methods given to teachers engaged in the literacy campaign<sup>1</sup>

In wiping out illiteracy among the adult population the teachers of the elementary and secondary schools played an important part. They not only taught adults to read and write but also instructed the literacy campaign volunteers, who were, known as 'soldiers of culture'. Well trained in methods and experienced, these teachers worked as inspectors and method experts, offering their services free of charge as social work. They directed the work of hundreds of thousands of volunteers most of whom had no special pedagogical training and knew very little of teaching methods. The teachers were in close contact with the people. They knew the people in the areas assigned to them and, since they enjoyed their respect, were able to draw many illiterates and semi-literates into the schools.

The literacy campaign volunteers were people from many walks of life. Among them were college and senior high-school students, engineers, agricultural experts, office workers, and literate industrial workers and peasants. Many enthusiasts among the teachers and volunteers were individually responsible for teaching several hundred persons to read and write. The most outstanding teachers were decorated by the government. Others were honoured by the People's Commissariat of Education with a 'Badge of Excellence', and many were placed on the Commissariat's Roll of Honour. The literacy campaign volunteers regarded their task as a responsible and honourable one. An ordinary collective farm woman living in the Steingardt District of the Krasnodar Territory, Danilova, said of her work: 'I have had the good fortune to teach 193 persons to read and write. Now all of them are working with greater confidence to benefit our people. There are leaders of brigades and sub-brigades among them.'

Because of the special nature of adult education a great deal of attention throughout the literacy campaign was given to guidance for teachers in the schools for adults. Congresses and conferences were held on an all-Russia scale, in regional and territorial centres and in districts to settle major problems of method and to share experience. These gatherings were attended by officials of the departments of education, teachers and literacy campaign volunteers.

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1. By A. M. Ivanova.

During the first 10 years of the campaign the following system was established for providing guidance on teaching methods. Centres for instruction in methods of adult education were opened in the various localities under the regional and territorial departments of education and under the People's Commissariats of Education of the Autonomous Republics. These centres had suitably equipped libraries, and were run by groups of enthusiastic teachers. In the capital, under the All-Russia Extraordinary Commission for the Eradication of Illiteracy, there was a methods section that analysed the results of the mass literacy campaign, compiled programmes and textbooks for the pupils and drafted programmes for training or retraining teachers for the campaign. The territories, regions and districts also had their methods departments, which guided the local organizations in accordance with instructions from the centre.

Among the many methodological problems discussed were the following:

The psychological aspect of work with adults and methods of determining the composition of a large group of adult students.

The political education of pupils and ways of drawing them into all types of civic educational work.

Ways of furthering the education of graduates of schools for illiterates and semi-literates.

The adjustment of programmes, textbooks and methods of instruction to correspond to the occupations of the pupils.

The training of new contingents of teachers to combat illiteracy.

The simplification of textbooks to bring them closer to the interests and requirements of the pupils and make them suitable for use in the 'Every literate teach an illiterate' drive.

More intensive methodological guidance for the literacy campaign teachers in the non-Russian areas.

Ways of determining the attainment and ability of pupils attending the schools and study groups.

Methods of planning curricula in the schools for illiterates and semi-literates.

The work of teachers with mixed groups, etc.

In order to improve methodological guidance more than 1,000 schools were selected to serve as 'basic schools', which became centres for such work. Their function was to provide systematic instruction to the literacy campaign staffs in the various districts, to conduct model lessons and exhibit other organizational forms of work with adults, to arrange conferences for the literacy campaign personnel, and keep track of all the methodological work done in the district.

Later, from 1928 onwards, the system of methodological guidance was slightly revised since hundreds of thousands of new literacy campaign volunteers without special educational training had been drawn into the movement and required constant assistance in the matter of teaching methods.

Besides the territorial, regional and district methodological departments operating under the literacy campaign staffs, smaller units were estab-



lished in the villages, in city blocks and in industrial establishments. These consisted of from ten to twenty volunteers and at the head of each was a professional methods expert. Several such units were brought together under a salaried specialist in teaching methods. The 'basic schools' were then abolished as being superfluous. A village council in each district or an industrial enterprise in each city was called upon to arrange a display of the best work done in teaching adults.

Methodological assistance was usually given to the literacy campaign staffs in the following ways: (a) short training courses were held; (b) an expert in teaching methods attended the classes given by the trainees, talked with them after classes and analysed the work of the pupils; (c) conferences were arranged with the literacy campaign volunteers to discuss urgent problems of method; (d) the volunteers attended each other's classes; (e) the volunteers were supplied with books on how to teach reading, writing, arithmetic and geography.

Since the literacy campaign volunteers had no special pedagogical training, they were called together every year before the schools opened to attend a brief refresher course in Russian and arithmetic. At the same time they had explained to them the programmes in language and arithmetic for illiterate adults and methods of teaching reading, writing, grammar and arithmetic. Volunteers who were to teach semi-literates were introduced to the programmes and methods of instruction they would be using in reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic and geography. These courses also acquainted them with textbooks and other school equipment and with ways of planning and keeping account of the work. The course also included a few hours of practice teaching.

Methodological bureaux for adult education were organized in the main towns of the republics, territories and regions. The duty of the methods experts at these bureaux was to study the work being done in the different localities and keep the teachers and volunteers working in the schools for adults informed of what was going on. For this purpose conferences, consultations and exhibitions were held. The latter included not only programmes, textbooks and visual aids, but also exhibits illustrating the outstanding achievements of some of the teachers and volunteers in devising methods and planning lessons and showing the work and attainments of pupils.

Every literacy campaign volunteer received daily methodological guidance from either an expert in teaching methods or an experienced teacher. These specialists helped the volunteer to organize homogenous groups of students, to assess the particular characteristics and level of attainment of the group, to provide the pupils with the necessary textbooks and other equipment, to plan work ahead (usually for periods of one week) and to plan individual lessons. At first the volunteers received the lessons already prepared, but later they planned them independently, only showing them to the specialist in teaching methods from time to time.

Throughout the school year the methods expert had to attend the classes of the volunteers in his charge, noting both favourable aspects and shortcomings and showing how various sections of the programme should be handled. Besides talking with each volunteer individually the method-

ologist held meetings with them as a group after the lessons to analyse the latter, to point out typical mistakes and explain how to eliminate them.

Seminars were arranged periodically for the volunteers so that certain methodological problems could be examined in greater detail. Among these were such problems as: (a) the importance of work with books and newspapers in the schools for illiterates and semi-literates; (b) ways of developing oral and written expression; (c) the link between reading and writing; (d) the specific aspects of teaching adults (with reference to some particular subjects); (e) how to use the primer of a certain author; (f) how to use *The Peasant Newspaper for New Readers*; (g) the particular aspects of teaching adults to count, etc.

Illustrative lessons on the more difficult topics with an analysis afterwards were organized regularly for the literacy campaign volunteers, the better teachers conducting the lessons. In addition to this direct guidance a large number of books and papers on teaching methods was published. There were primer aids containing not only an analysis of programmes but general instructions on the specific aspects of teaching adults and on how to conduct the first few lessons in the schools for illiterates, and an analysis of each of the lessons in the reading and writing course. Similar aids were published for teaching arithmetic. Later, at the beginning of the thirties, the publishing houses put out methodological studies on the teaching of the Russian language and of arithmetic in schools for semi-literates.

In addition, methodological notes were published on such individual problems as: (a) 'How to master the technical processes of reading, writing and counting in the schools for illiterates'; (b) 'How to master the technical processes of reading, writing and counting in the schools for semi-literates'; (c) 'How to teach the metric system in the literacy campaign schools'; (d) 'Individual and group instruction'; (e) 'Work with mixed groups'; and many other topics.

A newspaper *Assistance for Studies* was also put out for the literacy campaign staffs. Appearing six times a month, it reported outstanding work done by teachers and volunteers and pointed out shortcomings. One page was devoted to methods. Outlines of lessons in Russian and arithmetic were also published. It also included stories and articles for reading to semi-literates. The experience gained in teaching illiterate and semi-literate adults was discussed in detail in a special magazine called *School for Adults*.

# Survey of the literacy campaign in the U.S.S.R.<sup>1</sup>

## ERADICATION OF COMPLETE AND PARTIAL ILLITERACY DURING THE SECOND DECADE OF SOVIET GOVERNMENT (1927-37)

Between 1927 and 1937 the work of liquidating illiteracy and semi-literacy reached extensive proportions. Table 1 shows the number of adults given instruction in the U.S.S.R. in that decade:

TABLE 1

Year	Adult students (thousands)		
	Illiterates	Semi-literates	Total
1927	1 351.5	189.1	1 540.6
1928	1 247.0	218.7	1 465.7
1929	1 799.6	256.2	2 055.8
1930	5 771.5	922.5	6 694.0
1931	6 189.8	3 065.0	9 254.8
1932	7 663.6	6 582.1	14 245.7
1933	4 770.0	4 199.5	8 969.5
1934	4 659.8	3 758.0	8 417.8
1935	3 867.7	3 844.0	7 711.7
1936	3 329.6	3 775.9	7 105.5
1937	4 086.0	4 380.0	8 466.0

It will be noted from this table that in 1930 enrolment in the schools for illiterates and semi-literates was more than three times that of the previous year, while in 1932 it was seven times that of 1929.

There was a notable increase of pupils in the schools for semi-literates. Between 1929 and 1932 this number increased more than fourteenfold.

As the literacy campaign progressed more and more attention was given to work with semi-literates. Table 2 shows the decline in the proportion of illiterates and the rise in the proportion of semi-literates attending the schools.

1. By A. M. Ivanova.



TABLE 2

<i>Year</i>	<i>Per cent illiterates</i>	<i>Per cent semi-literates</i>
1930	86.4	13.6
1931	66.9	33.1
1932	53.8	46.2
1933	53	47

The age-composition of the body of students attending the adult schools also changed. With the introduction of compulsory education adolescents began to study in the general schools, and there was a consequent decline in the number of pupils under 16 years of age in the schools for adult illiterates.

The change in age-composition for the whole of the U.S.S.R. is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3

<i>Age-group</i>	<i>Schools for illiterates</i>			<i>Schools for semi-literates</i>		
	1927-28	1928-29	1929-30	1927-28	1928-29	1929-30
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Up to 16 years	37.3	33.1	16.2	23.1	18.5	15.7
16 to 35 years	60.0	63.3	76.3	72.6	75.5	76.2
35 and over	2.7	3.6	7.5	4.3	6.0	8.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

These years saw a marked increase in the number of women, especially from the farms, learning to read and write. Many attended the schools for illiterates and semi-literates, but many more studied individually or in small groups.

The percentages of female pupils enrolled in adult schools throughout the U.S.S.R. in 1930-31 are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4

<i>Women students</i>	<i>In cities</i>	<i>In rural areas</i>	<i>Total</i>
	%	%	%
In schools for illiterates	51.4	53.2	52.9
In schools for semi-literates	53.1	52.9	52.7
In individual study groups	73.2	63.8	65.9

At that time also the literacy rate among industrial workers was already quite high, as may be seen from the statistics of the Central Council of Soviet Trade Unions shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5

Categorie	Illiterates		Semi-literates	
	Total percentage	Percentage of this total who were studying	Total percentage	Percentage of this total who were studying
Industrial workers	5.3	69.2	10.2	59.5
Farm workers (on State farms and machine-and-tractor stations)	11.0	63.9	15.8	54.3

By 1938-40 scores of districts, thousands of village councils and scores of thousands of collective farms and industrial establishments succeeded in wiping out illiteracy completely in their respective areas or units. Meanwhile some of the non-Russian republics and other regions were also well on the way to wiping out illiteracy.

#### STATE OF LITERACY IN U.S.S.R. AS REVEALED BY THE 1939 CENSUS

A national census conducted in 1939 indicated a considerable increase in literacy. This may be seen from the figures released in 1939 by the Central Economic Accounts Bureau under the State Planning Commission of the U.S.S.R., reproduced in Table 6.

TABLE 6. Percentage of illiterates in the population of the U.S.S.R., 9 years of age and over, by sex and republic.

Republic	17 December 1926			17 January 1939		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
R.S.F.S.R.	72.0	40.5	55.0	92.3	73.0	81.9
Ukraine	75.5	40.9	57.5	94.8	76.8	85.3
Byelorussia	71.5	35.8	53.1	90.7	68.1	78.9
Azerbaidjan	33.2	16.4	25.2	81.5	64.5	73.3
Georgia	55.5	39.4	47.5	86.1	74.6	80.3
Armenia	49.5	19.2	34.5	85.0	62.4	73.8
Turkmenistan	16.5	7.7	12.5	73.3	60.6	67.2
Uzbekistan	14.2	6.5	10.6	73.6	61.5	67.8
Tajikistan	6.2	0.8	3.7	77.7	65.2	71.7
Kazakhstan	32.6	12.5	22.8	85.2	66.3	76.3
Kirghizia	22.1	7.4	15.1	76.7	63.0	70.0
Total for U.S.S.R.	66.5	37.1	51.1	90.8	72.6	81.2

In 1939 the percentage of literates in the population from 9 to 49 years of age was 89.1 per cent. Among the male population it reached 95.7 per cent. In the cities the literacy rate reached 94.2 per cent for both men and women and 97.6 per cent for men. Literacy in the rural areas showed an almost fourfold increase from 19.6 per cent in 1897 to 76.8 per cent

in 1939. Among women the literacy rate which was 12.4 per cent in 1897, rose to 72.8 per cent in 1939, i.e. nearly six times as high; corresponding figures for the rural areas showed an eightfold increase.

Special attention was paid to teaching the blind and the deaf and dumb to read and write. Special schools were established, programmes were worked out, and textbooks and other teaching material were published. The teachers in these schools were provided with regular methodological assistance at courses, seminars and conferences, and instructions on methods were published for their benefit. The All-Russia Society for the Blind and the All-Russia Society for the Deaf and Dumb with their local organizations in the territories, regions and autonomous republics played an active part in this work.

#### ILLITERACY AND SEMI-LITERACY ABOLISHED AMONG THE NON-RUSSIAN NATIONALITIES

The Soviet Government gave particular attention to establishing schools and drawing in pupils in the non-Russian republics, regions and districts of the country. The Azerbaidjan Republic for example, where only 9 per cent of the population could read and write in pre-revolutionary times, made considerable progress. Between 1920 and 1927, the number of illiterates and semi-literates who received the necessary schooling, was 102,369 and by 1939 more than a million and a half, including 435,900 women had attended the schools for literates and semi-literates.

The literacy drive among women assumed especially large proportions beginning from 1930-31 onwards. Between 1920 and 1928, the number of women who were taught to read and write was 4,367; in 1930 and 1931, it was 33,020, or nearly eight times as many; and during the next two years, 179,152, or about 45 times as many as during the first eight years. From 1930 there was an increase in all the republics in the number of illiterates receiving schooling. If we compare 1930 with the previous year, we find that the figures were nearly four times as high for Byelorussia, 2.7 times for Georgia, more than twice for Armenia, over six times for Uzbekistan and over five times for Tajikistan. To encourage more women to attend the schools for illiterates in Central Asia special women's literacy centres were established, individual and group studies were widely organized in the smaller communities, and 'schools on wheels' were organized to travel with the nomads.

During this period literacy advanced in the autonomous republics of the Russian Federation: Tataria, Chuvashia, Karelia, Bashkiria, etc. In the territory of the Tatar Republic, formerly the Kazan province, the literacy rate prior to the revolution was no more than 17 per cent, and among the women it ranged from only 1 to 2.5 per cent. The ability to read and write was confined almost exclusively to the Moslem priests and the children of prosperous Tatars. By 1937, however, quite a number of districts in the Republic had finished teaching illiterates and were developing a large school system for semi-literates. The southern autonomous republics of the Russian Federation did not lag behind in wiping out illiteracy. In Daghestan, for example, in many communities, which were previously totally illiterate, every one could read and write by 1937.



Similar activities were undertaken among the populations of the far north. Written languages were worked out for them in Soviet times. In the Evenk District of the Krasnoyarsk Territory, where more than 5,000 Evenks lived, the entire population was illiterate in 1928. The following year the first school was set up and nine Evenks were enrolled. By 1937, 1,122 illiterates and semi-literates in the district were studying, and 650 of them graduated that year. Since most Evenks were nomads and for that reason it was difficult to organize large schools for illiterates, the teacher usually travelled with his pupils or moved from one hunting group to another.

In the Nenetsk District in 1924 a literate person could scarcely be found, whereas in 1934 literacy was already up to 25 per cent. In 1934-35 in the Nenetsk District and other non-Russian areas of the northern part of the Soviet Union the liquidation of illiteracy was combined with a gradually intensified campaign to fight semi-literacy. For the settled population a system of adult schools was established in factories, State farms and cultural institutions, and for the nomads, travelling centres operated at their winter and summer halting-places.

In the literacy campaign among the non-Russian nationalities attention was given to selecting for pedagogical training people from among the local population, who knew the customs and language. Another major factor was the publication of literature in the native languages of the various nationalities.

To provide greater methodological guidance for teachers a special methods section was set up in 1930 at the central headquarters of the campaign. This section dealt with questions of programme and methods and studied and popularized the results of the work done in the cultural campaign among the non-Russian nationalities. To help the non-Russian republics, groups of skilled educators were sent to take charge of the organizational side of the work.

#### GENERAL CULTURAL PROGRESS OF THE GRADUATES OF SCHOOLS FOR ILLITERATES AND SEMI-LITERATES

The graduates of the literacy schools became good workers on the job and active participants in civic life. Learning to read and write helped them to understand their work better and made it easier for them to solve a great number of daily problems of living.

Here are some statements made by graduates.

Maria Alexandrovna Trushina, a 24-year-old woman working in the peat industry, gave conference delegates the following account of her own experience:

'I grew up in a village in the Ryazan Region and never went to school. So I remained illiterate. I knew the letters but didn't understand syllables. Then I married, and my husband soon went into the army. When I received letters from him, I couldn't read them. I would call in a friend and she would read them and laugh and tell others what she had read.

'In April I went to work in the peat industry. There I began to study. Now I not only write the address but I can even write a letter. When I get

my pay, I can figure out how much I am supposed to receive. Before, when I went to the store, I couldn't reckon how much to pay, but now I can count up at home how much money to take with me.'

Another woman working in the peat industry, Comrade Popova, a team leader, wrote the following to a regional committee of the Peat Workers' Union after graduating from a school for semi-literates.

'When I started work, I could only sign my name on the wage receipt. Now I can fill out the receipt myself and check my earnings. I can understand books and I've read Gorky's *Mother*, *Quiet Flows the Don* by Sholokhov and *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. I know what peat is, how it is formed and what it is needed for. I have learnt to add, subtract, multiply and divide. I not only work like a Stakhanovite<sup>1</sup> but I am active in my studies and help my less advanced colleagues both on the job and in the school. Thank you for your concern.'

Collective farmers likewise put the knowledge acquired in school to practical use. Here is what a member of the Krestyanka Collective Farm said about her studies: 'I was illiterate before. I took care of the cattle on the farm, and I found it difficult because I had to measure the calves and check their growth against a tabulated scale. I couldn't do it because I was illiterate. Then I entered a school for illiterates. Now I have graduated and I feel altogether different on the job. I have none of the difficulties I used to have.'

Collective-farmer Zhevlakov said the same about himself: 'I went to school the first day because I had nothing else to do. Then when I saw that the teachers were telling us useful things, I decided not to miss a single lesson.'

'I am in charge of a number of workers who look after the livestock, but I never knew much about animals. I knew how to harness a horse and that cows have to be milked, but I did not know why the cattle barns should be heated, why the feed should be varied or why it was bad to give the stock very cold water to drink. The school is opening my eyes.'

Alexandra Baranova of the Kalinin Collective Farm was illiterate until she was 36 years of age. Since learning to read and write she has improved her work. 'My flax at the fair was declared the best,' she wrote. 'I was able to raise it because I have learned to read books.'

Many graduates of the schools for illiterates and semi-literates entered 'Faculties for Workers' and later—between 1930 and 1941—the seven-year and secondary schools for adults. 'Faculties for Workers'<sup>2</sup> were opened in 1919 for the purpose of preparing young people from the working class and from the farms for college. In most cases they operated under the colleges. The day schools had three-year courses and the evening schools four-year courses. All students of the day schools received maintenance grants from the government. The evening schools enrolled people who studied while continuing with their regular work.

The 'Faculties for Workers' played an important part in developing a

1. Stakhanov was the initiator of a system of speeding up production in the coal industry; a Stakhanovite is thus a person who works very efficiently.

2. These 'Faculties for Workers' together with the schools for adults prepared new literates for secondary and higher technical education.



body of Soviet intellectuals. In 1928, 176 such schools had a total enrolment of 56,663 pupils, whereas in 1932-33 there were 1,025 'Faculties for Workers' and enrolment had risen to 339,500. From the thirties onwards, seven-year and secondary schools for adults became widespread.

As a result of all this work the Soviet Union was able during the forties, including the years of the Great Patriotic War, to bring the fight against illiteracy and semi-literacy to completion.

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# Fundamental and adult education

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## Contents

Editorial: The arts in adult education . . . . .	195
Community arts service in New Zealand, by P. Martin Smith .	197
Art education for adults in Sweden, by Olof Norell . . . .	207
Pictorial art for adults in Germany, by E. Rhein . . . . .	214
The place of the teaching of handicrafts in the adult education programme in Sriniketan, India, by Santosh Kuman Bhanja Chaudhury . . . . .	222
U.S. labour education uses the arts, by Mark Starr . . . .	230
Notes and records . . . . .	236

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